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The Great Refusal

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WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND
THE REPROACH OF ANNESLEY
IN THE HEART OF THE STORM
AN INNOCENT IMPOSTOR AND OTHER TALES
A COSTLY BREAK
LONDON: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER AND CO.

THE LAST SENTENCE
SWEETHEARTS AND FRIENDS
THE HOUSE OF HIDDEN TREASURE
THE WORLD'S MERCY AND OTHER TALES
THE FOREST CHAPEL AND OTHER POEMS
FOUR-LEAVED CLOVER
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LAYS OF THE DRAGON-SLAYER

• SANDS AND CO.

The Great Refusal

A NOVEL

By

Maxwell Gray

Author of "The Silence of Dean Maitland," etc.

Nella sua volontade è nostra pace

DANTE



London

John Long

13 and 14 Norris Street, Haymarket

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PART I

VITA NUOVA

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands ;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

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CHAPTER I

THE SWEET CITY

THE windows were open to the moonlit quadrangle, the night being still and soft. All the grey city, august with dignity of long association, fragrant with dreams of generous youth, mellow with thoughts of scholarly maturity, lay steeped in the magical light, her dreaming towers and buttressed walls silvery and shadowy, as full of delicate and mysterious beauty as some city of enchantment called up by the wave of a wizard's wand, and ready to fade back again into realms of visionary splendour.

If there be such a thing as the genius of place, that of an ancient university must be potent; every towered gateway and cloistered quadrangle, every chapel, choir, and orioled hall, must be eloquent of great things. The very stones must breathe an atmosphere of thought and prayer, of poetry and romance, of slowly matured theories and long sought truths, of factions long quieted and passions long stilled, and of the eternal gaiety and freshness of youth.

For not the least fascination of this grey antiquity, the home and haunt of the nation's ever-springing adolescence, is that the flower of her intellectual manhood was young there, and that those stately avenues by still waters, that sward deep piled by verdure of centuries, those timber-roofed halls and monkish cloisters, are thronged with fresh faces and echo with boyish laughter.

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A city of lovely dream it was to Bassett, who never wearied of looking on its loved stones and hearing its drowsy chimes, and delighting equally in its venerable age and perennial youth. To him oriel and tower whispered not only "the last enchantments of the Middle Ages," but the eternal beauty, the eternal verity, the restraining and quickening powers of devotion and faith.

"If I had ever had this chance," his father said, the day they first went over hall and chapel and walked in the green gloom of lime-tree avenues, "what a mark I might have made in life! See that you make yours, lad."

Bassett had been sorry for this denial to his father's youth, but not over-anxious to make his own mark in the world, whatever that might mean. To make one's mark, to get on in life, was the gospel dinned into his ears from the cradle; yet to him it was no gospel. Not that he was without ambition, Witness the sheets of paper covered with verse—English rather than Latin—in praise of the dream city's charm, and of the joyous stream of virile youth ever flowing through her classic ways—sheets whose fated end was to be rent asunder by the morning scout to kindle the poet's fire. The verses sang themselves not quite truly, or they failed in that subtle evasive something that distinguishes poetry from prose; or they were echoes—however true and sweet—still echoes, not capable of kindling responsive fire on the altar of any heart, but only that useful and comfortable glow in the old-fashioned college grate to which the scout committed them. The quiet of the dream city was stirred by the mellow voices of chimes telling the quarters, and shouts of boyish laughter and firm, elastic steps springing by; within, the cheery sound of young male voices rolled on without pause, eager with strenuous argument, mellow with jest, soft with irony, fierce with contradiction, jovial with sudden laughter,

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sometimes swelling in unanimous chorus—silent never. Odour of wine and fruit was checked by scent of tobacco, the light of shaded lamps was mysteriously dimmed by delicate spirals of smoke. Bassett held a cigar in the hand that rested on the window-sill—a cigar of price, of mythic and marvellous price—but extinct half an hour ago, unnoticed. “Such a casting of pearls before swine,” Grimsby thought, helping himself to one of the same brand.

Ambrosial nights were these to the set gathered in the low-pitched room; but they went by some humbler name, such as “wines,” ambrosial nights of good fellowship and free discussion, of sharpening of mind upon mind and character upon character, and building of life-long friendships. How confidently, how easily they mastered insoluble problems of life and fate! With what light touch they righted the wrongs of ages! How swiftly and superbly they remodelled systems, laws, constitutions; now shattering with one deft verbal blow the slowly upbuilt edifice of ages, with another rearing it afresh, every pinnacle, turret, and finial complete! And their criticism—how trenchant, direct, and uncompromising! No groping, no hesitation, never a shadow of doubt; all positive, confident, quite sure. It is good to be young—once a lifetime; better still to be young in mind and covetous of ideas; best of all to be young in company at the blossom-time of intellect and imagination. So Bassett, the host, thought—afterwards, when, terms all done and degrees taken, he was driven from the sheltering arms of the Alma Mater to the wide and roofless world. So the others thought and felt, perhaps—afterwards.

“Who was it said that property is theft?” asked Airedale, taking a cigarette from a gold case with a diamond monogram.

“One upon whose lips the wisdom of all the ages flowered in a phrase,” D’Arcy replied.

“A rich man is a sneak who rakes all the good things

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of the earth into his own muck heap," Grimsby said: "When he has raked in enough to feast a whole county sumptuously every day he's called a philanthropist and knighted. When he has financed two shady enterprises, ruined the shareholders of three companies, and provided the proletariat of four large towns with decadent fiction gratis, he receives the honorary degree of D.C.L. in this university, and is made a baronet—perchance a peer."

"No, no. Peerages are the meed of mighty brewers. The don of aftertimes will derive the term from beer-makers, according to Bunsen's law, by virtue of which the 'b' of beerage assumes the later form of peerage. Others, from the known tendency of the beverage—mark the gradual evolution of the 'v'—to steal men's wits, may derive peer from an A.S. root, signifying *thief*——"

"On hearing that one has grown rich, the plain man instinctively asks what devilry did it. Should excessive wealth be made penal?"

"Is this the Union?" growled Airedale, struggling with a wired cork. "What is whisky without soda?" he sighed to the cheerful hissing sequent upon a triumphant pop.

"Learning without wit," murmured D'Arcy.

"But what is wit without learning?" hazarded Lulworth.

"D'Arcy's unpublished sayings, or the reflections of the newly ploughed," came from a dark corner, at which a cushion was promptly aimed.

"Civilization," Grimsby was presently heard to mutter; "indigestible word! As if ours were a penny better than any that have come and gone before!"

"These cigars alone justify ours," D'Arcy asserted. "Chuck me a match, Airedale! Had they ever such smokes in Nineveh?"

"Was there steam and electric light in Athens?" Lulworth demanded.

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“No,” replied another. “Only the Venus of Phidias, the Fawn of Praxiteles, and the Frieze of the Parthenon, and the Temple of——”

“And the *Cedipus* of Sophocles and the *Hippolytus* of Euripides,” added Airedale. “And Plato——”

“And the *Hetairae* and Phryne,” interrupted Grimsby.

“They,” D’Arcy contentedly assumed, “of course, like the poor, are always with us.”

“Of course, necessary elements of civilization,” Grimsby said; “an essential part of our vaunted progress.”

“What is progress?” came from Bassett’s corner at the open window.

“Going to the devil as hard as you can drive,” growled Grimsby in a deep chest voice.

“I thought the devil was abolished years ago,” somebody urged.

“Not abolished,” another corrected, “only made into a company, unlimited, with largely increased capital and shareholders. Business carried on as before, and at several new branches.”

“Still, the head of the firm, the person, has demised,” D’Arcy pleaded. “Under what name does the new company trade?”

“Surely the old family name—legion,” Grimsby said; “the seven chief clerks or directors, the seven deadly sins, by all accounts are hearty as ever.”

But D’Arcy pointed out that sin was abolished with dogma, and that society no longer recognized the seven under the old titles. “They have become amiable weaknesses, or convincing realisms, or true human nature, or good fellowship.”

“The directors of the new company,” Airedale said, “are Cruelty, Lust, and Profanity, a fair amalgamation of the old seven.”

Then a velvety voice from an odorous blue velarium of tobacco wanted to know under which head lying would come.

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Whence arose warm debate as to whether lying were child or parent of the three, and, merging into the consideration of the cardinal or root sin, ended in a winged word from the window to the effect that lying had destroyed English literature, and was on the way to make the English tongue as dead as the Latin.

"Some meaning probably underlies that cryptic utterance, which to the average intellect would appear pregnant with unintelligibility of the highest order, dear Bassie," D'Arcy sadly commented.

"Expound, wise youth, expound; in sheer pity, explain to smaller minds the ways of lying with literature," Airedale implored.

"The boy," Grimsby replied, "means that multitudinous and meaningless novels have dissolved the nation's intellect in floods of verbose inanity."

The boy explained, on pressure, that striving after effect and exaggerated horror of the obvious had reduced literature, or at least that outward body of it called style, to a mere play with words, an ingenious juggle with phrases, in which images as remote as possible from the meaning were twisted and forced to express it in clipped and freakish phraseology. "This verbal legerdemain has been carried to such a pitch, that the best artists in this kind find it simpler to dispense with meaning altogether," he said.

"The youth's remarks, though tortuously set forth, are not wholly devoid of truth," Grimsby commented. "Affectation is the worm of style."

"Though this humble assembly is not the Union," added Airedale, "one may be permitted to observe that everybody tries to appear everything that he is not. We all grimace."

"Surely that is the property of the hated Gaul," objected a voice. "The true Briton is bluff and unemonstrative."

"So afraid of the effusive that he affects the brutal,"

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Bassett said. "That is the origin of slang and the destruction of the English language."

"To be earnest is the *cachet* of the smug," murmured a voice behind a favourite briarwood.

"Who would not be
An earnest smug,
Sitting alone,
Twaddling alone,
In the depths of a dull, dull tea?"

"That is but one attribute of the unspeakable smug," D'Arcy objected, looking up from a portrait he was drawing of the smug overcome by the excess of his own mediocrity.

"Is not superiority the *cachet* of the Oxford man?" Bassett asked.

"Not the divinest cigars," said Airedale, taking and lighting another, "can atone for platitude."

"A graver breach of hospitality than which——" D'Arcy began, when he was interrupted by his own unexpected subsidence on the floor, the chair from which he had just risen to rekindle his pipe having been gently but firmly withdrawn by a thoughtful friend.

"But, after all, what is civilization?" repeated Grimsby, as if in reply to the forcible utterance drawn from D'Arcy upon sudden contact with the floor.

"A kettle of steam," one weakly suggested, hastily amending it before the cloud of derision that darkened the brows of the assembly by: "motor-cars, bicycles, and week-ends."

Some one compassionately handed him a bottle gracefully reclining in a wicker basket, of which he did not scorn to avail himself.

"Is it the evolution of the sweet girl-graduate and dowager dean, or rather the connubial joy of the fellow?" asked another.

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"The whole of European civilization lies in a retort," Grimsby solemnly asserted.

"In the retort courteous?" D'Arcy gently asked.

"We heard at lecture this morning," said Lulworth, "that material comfort is the aim and cause of our present civilization."

"Now, by the silver poker that precedes the mighty, the lecture hit the gold," was heard in Grimsby's genial roar, and as if by an electric shock the character of the evening changed, Grimsby's thunderous torrents of deep-rolling anathema and foaming invective sobering at first touch the group of laughing boys, intoxicated with the heady wine of youth and gladness; "that is the canker at the core; that is the corrosive poison at the springs of national life; the spirit of commercial greed, the lust of luxury, the frenzied passion to be richer and ever richer, to make sudden fabulous fortunes, to outstrip every competitor in the base and bestial game," he shouted. "Our pleasures are material; intellect, imagination, fancy, love of beauty, come never into our pastimes; they are crushed out by the brute weight of wealth. Literature is dead, art degraded to mechanism. A spice of intellect in drama, a glimmer of thought in fiction, is fatal. Poetry is a lost art, conversation is extinct, manners are gone, courtesy dwindled to an irreducible minimum. We in England are merging into sheer plutocracy; the United States are a despotism of trusts, rent by chronic war between labour and capital. France is a tyranny of intolerant fanaticism at open war with Christianity; Germany a vast barrack under martial law. European fiction and drama are concerned only with sensual enjoyment, sexual irregularities, and squalid slum tragedy——"

"Tolstoi?" interpolated a voice.

"Tolstoi is materialism embodied; a living witness to the tyranny of Mammon. Sensual pleasures and squalid pains are his themes. His wrongs are all physical, his

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“revolt all against bodily suffering and poverty ; he loves Nature—the Faun and the Satyr—but she has no message for him. He is the young man of the gospel who made the Great Refusal ; he has actually heard and echoed through the world the command, “ Sell all thou hast and give to the poor,” and has not gone away, grieved, but trafficked with his conscience and lied to his own soul. Tolstoi ? who has shifted the burden of his riches to the weaker shoulders of his wife, and fares delicately and lives at ease in his comfortable home at her side ? Tolstoi ? the splendid genius, the warm-hearted man, the neo-Christian ? Oh ! the house that holds Tolstoi is the saddest spot in Europe.”

“ Reckon Tolstoi as wiped out,” one said in the pause that even Grimsby’s lungs exacted, “ but Dante’s ‘ gran rifiuto ’ was not——”

“ The principle is the same. The great moment comes but once a lifetime, the golden opportunity, the turn of the tide, the choice between blessing and cursing, heavenly birthright and earthly pottage——” The speaker’s massive head drooped, his eyes filled with dream ; in the sudden silence, the spurt of a match was heard and the mazy wreathing of smoke became perceptible.

“ Many hold there was no refusal, only hesitation,” came from the window, whence Bassett’s dark and dreamy gaze was still fixed upon the moonlit quadrangle, where a tower threw a sharp-cut shadow across dewy turf and grey arcade. ‘ He went away grieved,’ but came back convinced. It was Lazarus of Bethany, according to the ‘ *Legenda Aurea*.’ ”

“ Anyhow, Marshland’s picture of the young ruler touched his highwater mark.” He put ten years of his life into that painting, and yet certain of our gilded youth lightly brand current art as mechanism,” D’Arcy said.

“ Marshland is not current art,” Grimsby retorted, “ but a saving remnant. The irony of it ! That picture in the city of Mammon, stared at all day long by a stolid

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crowd of overdressed, overfed plutocrats, marshalled past by a beefy British policeman——”

“One man I honour and no second, the harmless and necessary policeman, the god-like guardian and embodiment of law and order,” one broke in.

“Union shop! The honourable gentleman is sconced,” cried another.

“Everybody is sconced. Drive on, Grim, we won’t go home till morning, till scouts they do appear! The man who grew this Chateau Margaux ought to be canonized.”

“For he’s a jolly good fellow, And so say all of us!” arose in sudden hilarious chorus, dying to a joyous laugh.

“That picture,” continued Grimsby, with unruffled gravity, “was bought at sweating price by some beast of a millionaire, and is probably hung in his dining-room in the steam of rich soups and costly concoctions brought from the ends of the earth to gratify gluttony advanced to a fine art.”

“As a matter of fact,” said the velvet voice from the window, “it was bought by my father.”

Sudden silence fell audibly in one solid mass upon the company; for two acute seconds Grimsby regretted that any one had taken the trouble to rear him to man’s estate.

“Why, of course it would be,” D’Arcy said presently. “The Chantrey Bequest trustees ask piteously why they should be ragged for buying second-best pictures when Sir Daniel invariably spots all the gems before the private views.”

“And is it really hung over the turtle soup, Bassett?” one asked.

“Not yet; Marshland exhibits it for a year.” The effect of a gentle smile was in Bassett’s voice, his face was in shadow, his hands clasped behind his head.

“Bass, dear, I’d forgotten,” Grimsby sighed.

“Why should or shouldn’t you? Facts are facts.” Bassett said, with gentleness that was almost tender. “My father,” he added, “has known hunger, and slept

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at night in damp archways, harried by policemen. No one ever helped him. He was quite a young boy when he kept his mother and sick sister out of the workhouse by hawking things about the streets. Few men could do what he has done."

"Everybody knows that he is a Titan," Grimsby said. "He has the brain of five men and the bodily strength of ten. You have to get up very early to find out what he doesn't know, and he taught himself."

"He never had any pleasure in his youth," Bassett added, a thrill of pity in his voice; "it was one long grind, body-work by day, mind-work by night. Even now he sleeps less than any one I ever knew."

"The world," D'Arcy put in, "is for the man who can stay awake longest—emphatically not, for Lulworth," pointing to a fair head sunk forward upon a stalwart breast, in peaceful unconsciousness alike of the fast thinning assembly, the untutored music it was emitting, and the curled moustache and nascent beard with which a considerate friend was embellishing it with a burnt cork.

When the room was empty and the last light footstep and facile laugh had died into silence, Bassett brought out a small photogravure of the great artist's famous picture and looked upon it with a grave, almost anxious face. And while he looked at the grieved and beautiful and lovable features of the young rich man, the often-remarked faint resemblance of his own face to that in the painting seemed to deepen. "He was grieved," he mused, when he returned the picture to its place in a drawer, "and went away. But he came back. I am sure that he came back."

Taking a book and adjusting a reading-lamp by the window, he stretched himself in a long deep chair, evolved by the luxury of generations of students, and more pleasant to the limbs than any bed, and full of the genius of the place, and thought that he was reading. But his eyes dwelt less on the book than on the moonlit quad-

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range, the creeper-covered college and the tower rising in the pure night sky, where faint pale stars seemed to sleep. He thought and dreamed, and thought again, brooding over a newly awakened chord, touched by a random hand, until dream and thought mingled and slid down and ever down silent, steep abysses of exquisite, restful oblivion, while the moon sank, stars brightened to pale in a ruddy dawn, and long gold sunbeams shot upon the topmost towers and glided softly down grey wall and mullioned window to lie in broad masses on turf and gravel, and the great bird-chorus stilled and human things began to stir.

Then his eyes opened upon the grave and familiar face of a scout, bearing water, hinting at baths and nowise surprised at the unpressed bed in the adjacent room.

A quick plunge and rough towelling, to a lilt of song, a spring into fresh clothes, a brisk walk through the sunny morning to chapel, where sun-smitten windows cast splendour of ruby and sapphire light upon rows of smooth-faced youth. How pleasant it was, how divine a thing to be only alive and kneeling there in the soft, sun-smitten gloom of the grey and gracious building, the pillared arches of which vibrated to the noblest thoughts ever couched in human speech!

And how sweet—unconsciously—the return, calmed, exalted, tuned to higher things, with all the bright blue, summer day ahead to dispose of at will!

Yet that day four years had been sad, the saddest of all in his life and the most memorable, touched nevertheless with a divine sweetness, a day apart and holy, the day of the passing of the best loved and to him most loving soul on earth.

“Bassie’s oak sported, by all that’s idiotic!” cried D’Arcy, rushing up the oaken stair two steps at a time and expressing his disapproval by an artistic tattoo of kicks, the result of long and careful practice; a proceeding copied at intervals during the forenoon by various friends

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with varying skill, and productive of unvarying imperturbability from the inmate, who only emerged from his stronghold after a solitary lunch. Then, resisting the attractions of the river and the importunities of rowing and cycling friends, he wandered through green paths by hayfield, wood, and stream, and, throwing himself under a rustling beech with a book, watched pearly clouds float lazily over a level horizon, where the dreaming city lay outspread with spire and dome and grey masonry bedded in green foliage, and followed again the linked sequence of newly roused thought that had again been touched in the course of the morning's reading.

CHAPTER II

DANTE'S DREAM

AN undergraduate is like a kitten endowed with intellect, with a tongue instead of a tail, and epigrams for claws, which, like the glad little beast's talons, tickle but seldom wound. The merry earnest and solemn mirth, headlong sally and unpremeditated frisk, the irresponsible freak and carelessness of consequences, of the incarnation of frolic called kitten, all are distinctive of the young human males for whose benefit these ancient seats of learning chiefly exist. All the long-repressed childishness and gaiety of that solemn personage, the public schoolboy, bubbles up fresh and unchecked in his sudden emancipation from the grave responsibilities of an upper-form boy; that awful dignity laid aside, he gives way fearlessly to the natural joyousness of early youth. The burden of giving a sceptical world assurance of his manhood falls from his shoulders with the certainty of having definitely ceased to be a boy. Being no longer a fag or a fag-master, he has none to govern and no one to obey. Happy, happy undergraduate! Even the silent despotism and unwritten code that rule in congregations of male youth press lightly here; the university man may choose his own set or even be solitary; he has an oak, he can sport it without incurring the extreme penalty of youthful law.

A university is not the whole world; but it is some sizes larger than Rugby or Eton, so that every undergraduate is not compelled to be the exact counterpart of every other.

Dante's Dream

So in this burst of sudden freedom the youth begins, and also finishes, to be a boy ; he begins also, after long compression to a Procrustean type, to develop personality. He may train as an athlete or pose as an æsthete ; he may work or play, as he lists ; absorb himself in missions and ritual, or dogs and horses ; read decadent fiction or Shakespeare and the Greek Testament. He may study telepathy, psychic phenomena and equine pedigree, Swinburne and Darwin, Ruskin and the sporting papers ; he may practise oratory at the Union, or chaff distinguished recipients of honorary degrees at the Encænïa ; he is permitted to write verse, though he dare not make a pun. He may acquire debts or the distinctive manner of his set, consume midnight oil or wine ; he may even, without incurring lasting opprobrium, read for honours ; but he must eschew the seductions of science. An undergraduate may do many things accounted great among the sons of men, but the greatest of all is to row stroke in the Varsity Eight. This can only be done by one man—the flower, the pearl, the king of his species—for the year. One very sad thing can happen to a university man ; he can, and sometimes does, wither and harden by slow degrees into a don. But the fit presentment of this tragedy still awaits an Æschylus.

Unvexed alike by rates or responsibilities, by taxes or the tenderness of female relatives, by the price of coals or family cares, the undergraduate is indeed a free and joyous being. His is the delicious, the voluptuous freedom that lies within slight but well-defined limits, the freedom that is so infinitely free by reason of its restraints.

The above appreciation of undergraduate life is due to one who had only wished to live it herself, vainly attempting in company with others to live its feminine counterpart in the same city and in pursuit of the same studies—notably as far as they were academic—learning proper being a mere side-dish or *hors d'œuvre*, no essential part

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of the feast, to the golden male youth, who squander joyous terms in the study of a great variety of things that are not contained in books—and not the sole end and aim it is to women.

"From what boys say, and still more from what their fathers say, when the bills come in," this girl undergraduate's auditor replied, "you are not far out in your drawing. But I never knew a kitten in the least like Airedale," she added, slipping easily from her bicycle and leaning on a gate in the leafy lane they were passing through in the warm glow of a June afternoon.

"Dear, solid old Airedale. His gambols would indeed be elephantine," the girl student assented, bringing up and alighting by her side.

"These wretched boys always have the best of everything, and probably always will," Isobel continued. "And yet, Blanche, and yet, somehow I think I'd *rather* be a girl."

"That is because you are so abominably handsome. You can always make things even with them."

"It isn't beauty exactly," the fair-haired girl said. "Besides, what am I in comparison to you? And yet——"

"And yet 'all the lads they look at you' and not at me," Blanche said.

"Not *all*. Why, Airedale adores you, and can't hide it."

"Oh, Airedale! They always begin with a hopeless passion, usually for an inaccessible barmaid. No, it isn't beauty alone; it's—it's—an aura, an emanation, a magnetic charm, a sort of radio-activity. And it's partly being different from them, that attracts; they call it being womanly. Yet we don't value men for their muscle."

"But we don't like them flabby, and we do like them to do the things we can't."

"Some things. But why are we so absurdly sorry for

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sick men ? and why do men's tears knock us so completely out of time ? ”

“ One wept bitterly last week because his proposals were definitely and politely declined. I could hardly help stamping upon him.”

“ Ah, you ! There's a strain of tiger in you,” Blanche said ; “ but in a general way women are more chivalrous than men. Are you remembering that we shall have to ride the whole way back again ? ”

“ Let us go and have tea somewhere first. I want to find those fritillaries. ‘ I know what white, what purple, fritillaries,’ etc. Why, Blanche, with all your learning and superiority to feminine weakness, you are very nearly done. Come, there's a path leading to trees and a wood. Let's go there and lie in the shade. Airedale has gone back with the others.”

From the lane they turned to a turfy slope that climbed very gently to the wood, leading the cycles and treading the cool spring of the sward. The river's faint murmur in afternoon stillness made them aware of a silver and emerald flash between trees below, scent of mown grass and fretting of scythe upon stone betrayed a hayfield behind a hedge, that threw out long sprays of wild rose. The cycles were left leaning against the hedge-bank, and the two slender figures, flowerlike in light summer dresses, moved slowly uphill, gathering vetch and scabious, buttercup and lace-like parsley, red campion and white, with clover, late-lingering stitchwort, orange-tinted trefoil, moon-daisy, crane's-bill, and a profusion of wild-rose and rarer honeysuckle, their skirts brushing orchis and rich mosaic of many a fairy blossom.

Presently they came to where the broad arms of a beech spread almost into the hedge, the sudden thinness of bloom in which drew attention to the lordly tree. A light air stirring, like a passing thought, lifted the outer sprays of the great green branches so gently that they seemed to breathe with conscious pleasure

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and happy life. The light breeze died, and the down-bending boughs appeared to be shedding benediction upon what they shadowed. And there, at the foot of the polished beech-stem, in the dappling shade, the girls saw a man lying full-length, his head sunk on an outstretched arm from which a book had slipped to the grass, his face upturned to the roof of living green, his eyes fast sealed in the deep sleep that scarcely breathes; all the young elastic figure relaxed in the restful grace and stillness of a Greek marble. The beauty of the still face, calm and grave, yet with a look of intense happiness, was impressive and arresting to these young things.

"A faun, a sleeping faun," Isobel whispered, "else the guardian spirit of the wood."

"Too spiritual. Galahad? Not quite. Parsifal, the pure fool?"

"This is no fool, Blanche. Lohengrin, perhaps; there's the swan waiting on the river for him."

"An enchanted knight, certainly. It must be Chaucer's knight, or his son, the light-hearted young squire. Poor lad, how tired he looks!"

"How abominably lazy! Only one of your kitten undergrads, after all. Was it wine or oil last night?"

They were turning away, when another breeze lifted the branches and let them fall with a motion too soft for sound, the downward bend of the fan-like sprays making the green shadows ripple over the sleeping face; then it caught, as if in fairy hands, a thin manuscript from the stirred pages of the open Dante on the grass, and tossed it lightly away. Once on the slope, the paper began to dance to the music of imperceptible airs, making for the water in irregular bounds like a living creature. Blanche chased, caught, and brought it back, her steps noiseless on the turf.

She was shutting it in the book, when the sleeper opened his eyes, closed and opened them again, apparently less troubled than pleased by the vision before

Dante's Dream

their gaze. The Purgatorio on the grass was open at Dante's dream of Lia gathering flowers to make garlands for her youth and beauty, while her sister, Rachele, contemplated her own perfection in a mirror. And when the sleeper opened his eyes the ladies were there, alive in breathing beauty in the warm June light ; wild rose and honeysuckle were in Lia's hands, tall foxgloves were ranged like sentinels behind her, sunbeams wove an aureole in her shining hair ; the water flashing between willows yonder was Lethe. Here the contemplative Rachele approached the dreaming poet, a mystic scroll in her hand. Yonder on the blue horizon, backed by ranges of pearl and opal cloud-peak, lay the heavenly city, its towers and domes glowing in ethereal light. The gracious forms moved without sound, their bright-hued garments brushing the flower-braided sward, when Rachele laid the paper in the open book and said, not in rich Italian poetry, but plain English prose, "This is yours, I think," and the spell dissolved, the dream vanished, and the dreamer leapt at a bound out of the poet's mystic vision into actual English summer upon solid English earth, the scroll in his hand, bewilderment in his eyes.

An impression of sapphire glances and wild flowers and of a pensive face with a scroll, a thrilling blend of dream and reality, poetry and life—and the gracious forms had vanished, melting through the hedge, which they passed by a gap, to the hayfield, whence the song of the scythe gave evidence of cheerful summer labour. Not Lethe, but the familiar river of eights and bumps and gaudy galleys, sparkled between those trees, and no spiritual city, but the solid reality of age-worn wall, and ponderable spire, glowed yonder in the warm afternoon light, giving assurance of an ancient town, a home of learning and thought and the joyance of life and youth.

The vision had faded, leaving nothing behind but a warm stir of heart, the thrill and fire of blue and hazel glances, and a sense of something fresh and vivifying like

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dawn ; it was not all a dream, witness that long honey-suckle trail and spray of wild rose dropped from a white hand to fade on the sunny grass, unless—as indeed happened—one should take them home and cherish them.

"Surely," said Blanche afterwards, when they were sitting in the wood shadows, "surely I have seen that face before."

"There was something familiar, certainly. But what?"

"A likeness to some statue or picture," said Blanche, staring dreamily into a hazel thicket.

"In Airedale's rooms—of course," cried Isobel ; "his friend, Bassett."

"Of course, and Marshland's model."

"Not his model. The likeness was accidental. Airedale can't see it. Pity he's such a prig."

"Is he?"

"So they say."

"Well, what is a prig, Isobel?"

"A youth without reproach."

"No. But without popular and pleasant reproach."

"No, Blanche. It's being superior that earns the name. That is why Joseph's brethren had to drop him in the pit."

"The truth is we are all too much afraid of being prigs to be natural. We pretend to vices too high for us, and aspire to pleasant foibles beyond our reach. We cast scorn upon ideals that we secretly revere. So Airedale is a prig, Isobel?"

"Not Airedale ; our sleeping faun, his friend."

"Very likely," Blanche said sleepily. "Yet I hear that our poor faun is not unpopular."

"Who could be unpopular on a million a year?"

"I thought he was sent down for making bonfires with other people's chairs—his father has often boasted of it."

"Poor Sir Daniel ! He had the mortification of hearing that the boy was sent down by mistake. But he

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won't own it. The fine new English self-made man, all of the modern time."

"Boys won't even be boys sometimes. Let us go and find some tea."

The scroll that had fluttered back to the faun turned out to be a few sheets of thin paper, yellowed with time and covered with a small delicate script in faded ink, some pages from a diary of the intimate kind called confessions, the confessions of a soul; in this case truly a beautiful soul—the same that left its earthly tenement this day four years. It was her legacy to a beloved son, who had read it till the pages were frayed and torn in places. The thoughts would have lost some charm and much meaning in any transcription. A few clear and simple and even obvious reflections were traced on these pages in brief aphoristic form; taken as glosses upon the writer's life, and interlined with many memories, they were pregnant with suggestion and rich in meaning. Random and disconnected, they had been set down at intervals just as they arose. For instance:

"Great poverty is a great evil, but great wealth may be a far greater evil."

And the writer had known both poverty and riches. Again: "There is a poverty so abject as to atrophy the spiritual life. Has excessive wealth a like effect? The wise man prays for neither poverty nor riches." And this—so often on the writer's lips: "Money can buy nothing that is worth having."

Yet the young ruler went away grieved. And yet Adrian's father had spent half his life in piling up fabulous wealth, had done nothing but "make money," as he expressed it, from his childhood. "Wait till you feel the pinch of poverty," was a phrase often on his lips.

His son had never felt that pinch; money and all it can buy had been the most constant element in his life, passing unnoticed and unvalued. Poverty was a distant evil, like old age and sickness, known, but never thought

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of. Wealth, like health, decent conduct, and enjoyment of life, was normal. Yet a fierce struggle for it was the avowed aim of most men's lives. To develop the resources of a place—town, village, continent—to “open up” desolate tracts to trade, to bring the “blessings of civilization,” to savage races, to promote industrial enterprise, to *make things hum* (in the Yankee tongue); these phrases, the well-worn counters of table talk at home, all meant one thing—to make money. How well he knew, how well he hated, that perennial phrase, “There is money in it”! Until last night, when some thrill of passion in Grimsby's voice had fired a new train of ideas, he had scarcely thought what poverty might mean to such as he. Might it mean relief, ease, a burden dropped, as to the young noble of Assisi?

What is the corrupting, hardening element in riches? What is wealth? Where were art, literature, learning, philosophy; where gentle manners and noble speech, leisure for thought, for social amenities, for acquirement and exercise of all that tact, courtliness, and knowledge necessary to those who rule; where, in short, were civilization without wealth? Masters of the “dismal science” told different tales of the origin and essence of this thing; none had clear notions as to the manner and justice of its distribution; many were shocked at the inequalities, appalled by the violent contrasts of excessive wealth and abject poverty. Were they so violent? Did it really matter whether one was born to luxury or labour? Did not indigence mean compulsion to labour? Was not labour an instant remedy for indigence?

Shouts of laughter, cheery scraps of song and talk from the hayfield punctuated these musings, giving the lie to any tragic gulf between wealth and poverty. Wealth lay in the shade in the flower-time of youth, burdened with the world's pain, saddened by the injustices of life on one side of the flower-tangled hedge; Poverty tossed hay in the sun on the other, laughing in pure light-

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heartedness and singing for joy of life. The same cloudless summer blue arched above both, the same hay-scented air stirred about them. Wealth bulks too large in men's minds.

So the wealthy born had mused in the afternoon quiet, turning from hard prose of reality to the gentle poetry of the great soul that for over five centuries has fed the finer souls of Europe, till the ripple of the *terza rima* and the drowsy influences of the summer day made the dream real and the reality a dream, into which two women's faces broke and vanished, leaving flowers behind and feelings like flowers and thoughts that were poems.

CHAPTER III

IN A COLLEGE GARDEN

THE beautiful city lay serene and proud, "whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages and by her ineffable charm calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us—to the ideal, to beauty—to perfection"; there she lay in the mellowing light, beneath cloud-reared Alps of fire-opal and beryl and amethyst.

And here above the river the stalwart mowers stood in line, bending to the rhythm of the scythe-sweep, their brown faces beaded with labour, muscles rippling over their bronzed and shining arms. So the muscle rippled and the brows were beaded of golden youths rowing in the eights; only the oarsmen looked strained and anxious while the labourers' faces were serene. The play of muscle and the strength of manhood in action is ever a fair sight, no less fair in the mowers at their task than in golden lads at their play. But what had the towers whispered to these? the university man wondered as he watched them. What consciousness had these cheery swains of medieval enchantments of or any magic from any age? Had the ideal, perfection, beauty, any message for them; was the true goal of all of us theirs? Yes, these simple, frugal lives might have more of the ideal, of perfection, of beauty, than many a life passed under the very shadow of those whispering towers, in the very precincts of that city of ineffable charm.

Was it the magic of wealth that had called all that loveliness of traceried window and cloister, of glowing

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glass and graceful pillar into being? Or a king's penitence, a statesman's dream, a woman's charity, a priest's piety, a merchant's beneficence, a scholar's hope and love? Was not the fairest of all, the lily-like tower of which dominates the whole city at its entrance by the meeting of the waters, due to one so much in love with the ideal, as to be content to gather a little group of scholars round him in the open street, till his dream should be perpetuated in stone?

There, set in summer light, shone the city, a beautiful protest against the life of sense, the long laboured product of the best thought and hope of the past, as well as the living growth of the current hour. Dear and ever dearer was the sweet city to her nursling, endeared by personal dreams and aspirations, by youthful companionships, by the magic of her past, by the splendour of her hopes and ideals; but dearer now than ever in her glory of purple shadow and golden light, because of a sudden vital thrill in the soft summer breeze.

So the riddle of the painful earth soon vanished and was lost in the beauty of sunset and the cheerful sounds from the hayfield, where long grey windrows were being tossed by laughing girls in sun-bonnets, and fresh grass was falling before the white flash of scythes.

It was the eve of the notable week when the grave and learned city gives herself up to stately revel and boyish pranks, when cloisters and gardens, designed for studious quiet and celibate musings, are bright with fluttering female garments and stirred by feminine voices, when sisters and cousins—chiefly other men's—invade precincts sacred to male mankind, when the shadow of hoary towers and the gloom of noble and piteless libraries is disturbed by frivolous feminine laughter, and when the midnight quiet of mediæval halls—sacred to learning and grave discourse—is broken by music and the sound of dancing feet.

How bright, how gay, how throbbing with youth and

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life, was the venerable city in the broad June light, when the "adorable dreamer" stirred from her secular slumber to share in the tide of laughter that swept her streets, flooded her halls, and rippled under the stately trees that shadowed the secure quiet of her gardens.

One evening, early in the festal week, the trees in one of these shaded haunts of quiet bore strange fruit of coloured lamps; the sound of hundreds of feet fell hushed on the deep turf, and the murmur of hundreds of voices was like the continuous organ note of bees humming in masses of ivy bloom. Fantastic lights played with deep shadows on crowds of moving figures; they touched the boyish face of Lulworth, who, as so often, was Bassett's shadow, silent, and faithful, and happy. Grimsby paced the turf on Bassett's other hand, cheerfully grumbling at things unconnected with the gay garden scene. Bassett himself was absorbed in recognizing faces emerging from the deep gloom of linden column and chestnut arch, when he heard a voice that quickened his pulse.

"Like an enchanted dream," the fresh voice was saying with a sort of languorous pleasure, and the lamp-light chanced upon a slender figure in a shimmering gown, that to Bassett seemed a tissue of moonbeams.

"You'll see nothing of the masque, unless you let me find you a place," the deep voice of Airedale objected; "people are flocking to the front already."

"The whole thing is a masque," the fresh treble voice replied, stirring Bassett's surprised heart with joy, as a slender figure passed him, her hair shining in the fitful light, her hand on Airedale's arm; while Grimsby, grumbling on to an impassioned climax, subversive of all conceivable theories and existing authorities, found himself grasping the amazed arm, and growling into the indignant ear, of a most reverend and conservative don. Bassett had vanished in a second, drawn into the orbit of the sweet-voiced star, and followed by his satellite, Lulworth.

Unreasoning hatred of Airedale suddenly possessed

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Adrian; it was abominable of him to rush a lady through the crowd like that; it was an absolute race. She was positively out of breath; Airedale had the manners of a bear.

Through moving swarms of fresh-faced men with other men's sisters and anybody's cousins, through throngs of aunts and mothers and even fathers, unmoved by the mournful aspect of shocked yet weakly tolerant dons, forgetting to bow to the wives of Fellows and Masters, and casual acquaintances, forgetting everything but the sudden enchantment of the living dream under the beech tree, Adrian followed the pair till at last Airedale dropped his charming friend on a row of seats on a slight rise in the full blaze of coloured lamps hung in a chestnut crowning the knoll. Bassett stopped in the background, the best place to see the masque, he told Lulworth, and tried hard to catch Airedale's eye. He was much gratified and relieved to observe the excellent terms existing between Airedale and the lady of the woven moonbeams. They laughed so childishly together, and chattered with such perfect unrestraint, it was easy to see that their intimacy was one of years, perhaps of all their lives; great peace was in this thought.

At last Airedale turned and slid between the chairs with a brightening face and the cry, "Why, there he is! Come along and be introduced," and Bassett, suddenly shy, emerged from the shadow and found himself face to face with the lady of the poet's dream. She had risen and turned from the silvan stage, her eyes emitting a flash and her finely pencilled brows slightly rising when she saw him.

"Lady Isobel Mostyn," Airedale murmured, having duly presented him, pronouncing the name with no more emotion than if he were mentioning the arrival of the afternoon express.

Bassett took a long look—too long, no doubt—unaware that he had said nothing on being presented, and the

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shadow of a smile passed under the still surface of the lady's steady gaze.

"I am afraid we must have blundered into a delightful sleep yesterday," she said.

"Beautiful dreams are too rare to be repented."

"Yes, Blanche is a dream—a delightful dream—and a dreamer, too," she added, turning to Airedale, who assented with a gesture.

"But I see no Greek faun," he added, and she laughed a joyous little laugh.

"Your sister?" Bassett asked, "I mean the lady who dreams and is a dreamer."

"My cousin and very best friend."

"Lady Isobel has not more than fifty very bests, to my certain knowledge," Airedale murmured, and the seventeenth-century instruments which had been discoursing music by Lawes stopped, and a gentle hush—sh—sh ran round, silencing the general hum of voices. Then all turned to see a white-robed Greek youth glide from the massed shadows behind the lime-tree boles, and a deep voice broke through the sudden silence, with—

"Before the starry threshold of Jove's court,"

and Bassett, feeling himself verily at that ethereal altitude, stepped back ten paces behind Lady Isobel's chair, where he remained, as still as the tree-trunk behind him, until the woodland scenes were done, and that of the banquet hall about to be presented, and the long-pent flood of talk rolled back like a summer wave.

"Do you like it?" he asked, bending over her chair.

"Oh, it's lovely! No affectation; it seems real—that is, ideally real; no, I mean really ideal."

"Better than Her Majesty's?"

"Different. Not drama. Poetry properly recited in poetic surroundings."

"Just what masques were meant for, Belle," said a light contralto voice from the shadows.

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"But for people's clothes, we might be living in Milton's early days, when these things were usual," Isobel suggested.

"Yes. That tower was there, and the hall—you just catch the pinnacles tipped with moonlight—all were in existence before Comus was written."

"The college," Airedale added, "was a Bernardine establishment in the thirteenth century. A gradual devel—"

"For the love of Heaven," interrupted Isobel's joyous voice, "have pity upon us poor Philistines, Airedale. We are not *all* reading for honours."

Bassett could not catch the features of Isobel's very best friend in the shadows, which heightened the romance of the summer-night festival. "*You* are not a student, Lady Isobel, are you?" he asked.

"Heaven forbid. I have no business in these classic shades, only pleasure. One of the frivolous butterflies who come to pity, and admire, the busy bees."

"There are also drones in this hive. You would be shocked at our frivolity if you knew half. Don't let Airedale impose upon your innocence."

"He can't. I've known him from his cradle—or at least mine. Poor dear, he is trying for the moment to live up to that woman undergraduate talking to him."

"We all do that when we have the chance. Rare occasions they are luckily, for the strain is awful. Five teas with learned sisters and cousins are said to be equivalent to fifty lectures—"

"Why can your sex never allude to ours without sarcasm?"

"Why does your sex always misunderstand the honest adoration of ours?"

"This is what Blanche, my student friend, calls the Socratic method, nothing but questions."

"As for example: Shall you be at the House's ball to-morrow?"

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"Shan't I? for another."

"Then will you give me an early place on your card?"

"Ah, but will you be an early enough bird to catch the worm?"

"Isn't it a butterfly I'm aiming at?"

There was a joyousness and exuberant gaiety in Isobel's voice and in the sparkle of her dark blue eyes that went to Bassett's head. Was this fairy garden-scene the fragment of some enchanted dream?

Now Comus appeared in the wood with his magic rod and cup, and made his incantation in the loved familiar poetry; but Bassett was drinking deep of a witchery far beyond the enchanted wine of Comus. And whereas the Comus cup degraded men to the semblance of beasts, this glamour that overpowered him, transfigured to angel seeming, and lifted to celestial heights—

"Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
That mortals call the world—"

"Pity she was so sour and disagreeable," Isobel thought, when the lady had come to the banquet and resisted and shattered the wizard's spell; "she almost makes one side with Comus."

"Puritanism in a nutshell," Airedale said; "bound to react in the Comus rout of Old Rowley's court."

"Oh! Polonius!" Isobel sighed.

"She might as easily have been sweet and winning," Blanche said; "even virtue is not 'harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose.'"

She moved as she spoke into a splash of lamp-light, Airedale chuckling to himself, "I like the notion of calling Milton a dull fool," and Bassett recognized the pale and pensive features of the lady with the scoll of Dante's dream. And presently he found himself walking at this lady's side, divinely conscious that the other lady was immediately ahead, under the wing of a youthfully dressed lady with hair of dazzling gold, who appeared to have some maternal authority over her.

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The joys of bicycling, the absence of ragging in female colleges, the inferiority of Milton's poetry to Shakespeare's, the superiority of feminine cocoas to masculine wines, and the probable continuance of fine weather during the festal week, were fully discussed under the silver-starred sky before the inevitable good night came. And then, without knowing exactly how or when, Adrian found himself walking alone in a moonlight-threaded cloister, in a delicious sadness at having found no opportunity to shake hands with the lady of the blue glance, and a delicious gladness at everything else, alike destructive of sleep and productive of verse.

It was a week of pleasure so poignant that pain seemed gentle by comparison, a week of gay functions at which the appearance or non-appearance of a face meant rapture or despair. Breakfasts, luncheons, teas, and garden-parties by day, balls, concerts, and theatricals by night, carefully planned accidental encounters in sunny forenoons, when wearied mothers and aunts rested to sally forth with newly burnished hair and freshly tinted complexions later; these things made a mock of time and had the effect of years upon the growth of friendship.

But Sunday, with the university sermon and no mundane festivities, brought a breathing space in the breathlessly joyous week, and the glowing afternoon found the two ladies of the undergraduate's dream sitting under shady limes, the trunks of which were so spurred and channelled and outstanding towards the base, they had the effect of buttressed masonry. Here a thirteenth-century tower rose into a sky of pale blue, above a mass of fresh and full foliage steeped in afternoon light; there was a wall covered with green, a blaze of flower-border under it; here a dial told the sunny hour, and a Latin inscription moralized it; yonder the battlemented roof and tower of one college, and long, pinnaced wall of another glowed golden in mellow light. The air throbbed with music of many bells, else there was stillness, every

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bird silent in its green covert, the very bees humming drowsily.

"Why can't we travel into other centuries?" Airedale wondered. "All this bounce over the marvels of science—oh, Lord! their blessed science!—and annihilating space and time, yet they can't even carry you back fifty years, much less five centuries."

"How divine a thing it would be," sighed Isobel, "at seventy, for instance, to be twenty again!—Mother would be content with twenty years back. She—hm—dresses for that."

"I would be dropped into the thirteenth century," Blanche said.

"Airedale, what century would you like some time-annihilating airship to drop you into?"

"Early sixteenth for me, Philip Sidney and good Queen Bess, or the fifty years of Athenian power and glory, from Æschylus to Euripides. What is yours, Bass?"

Bassett was lying face downward on the turf by Airedale, who growled in monosyllables without turning his head.

"If only one, the first," Bassett said, without rhyme or reason. But Blanche's face told him she knew why.

Bell music held the sunny air, a white foam of pinks broke in warm spice from a flower-border over the deep turf; Isobel's eyelids drooped sleepily, Blanche's dark gaze grew darker, the peace of the hour sank into four hearts and made a life-long memory. The girls' dresses touched the grass at Bassett's hand; they were of a fine white fabric that fell into good folds and made the cool green shadows cooler. Both ladies wore broad, picturesque hats, Blanche had a necklace of coral and a knot of Malmesbury carnations, Isobel was all white with a bunch of wax-white roses with waxen green leaves. These increased the fresh and virginal effect of the whole picture and gladdened the heart of Adrian, who knew quite well where they came from.

"Why not take the goods the gods provide us?" Isobel

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said. "Some misguided anonymous divinity sends me flowers twice every day."

"Not misguided," Bassett corrected, "rather with a proper sense of the fitness of things."

"With a capacity for boundless cheek," Airedale added. "Never mind. We're in the home of lost causes."

"Causes are never lost till they are won," Blanche said.

"By somebody else. Egeria's paradoxes are truer than most people's logic," Airedale murmured, with drowsy content.

She smiled into his frankly affectionate gaze, and something was said in praise of phrase-making and something in blame. A still happiness lit Airedale's square, honest face; beneath his surface impassibility, where deep and strong feeling flowed, there ran a consciousness of being near the two people he loved best. Isobel came very near the best; but Blanche commanded something more than half-conscious love. To him she was the sum of all that was most becoming and worthy of reverence in woman; her character, her intellect, her presence, all had impressed and pleased him from childhood on, though it chanced that he had known less of her than of Isobel, his pretty perverse playfellow who had needed so much discipline and exacted so much love.

Not the most dramatic and decisive hours of life are the most memorable, but rather the tranquil, uneventful moments, when all is in true accord and the music of life flows golden clear without jar or dissonance, as if a passing angel had taken the harp in his gracious hand and touched it to perfect sweetness. The flash of white upon blue when pigeons flew in sunlight, the hum of bees in flower-cups, and red glow of snapdragon on ancient wall, and green of creeper clinging to buttress and oriel, often came to these four like a benediction in after years. An hour was to come when one of them would stand by the sundial in the grey silence of an autumn day, when the ravaged garden was emptied of life and gaiety, and would

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look at the unsunned dial-plate with pain too deep for tears, and sweetness too poignant for thought, and hear the stilled voices and picture the vanished faces, and wonder why it had been so sweet after all.

Gayer hours followed that Sunday peace, and the brilliant week was over, the end of the enchanted time crowned by a divine, an unearthly sweet, tea in Bassett's rooms. Among the guests were Airedale and Lulworth; Lady Kilmeny's golden tresses made a splendour above the teacups, and her pencil-rimmed eyes shed lustre on strawberries and cream. Her daughter Isobel and her niece Blanche were with her.

"Such a charming week," Isobel sighed at the door to which the host had escorted them, "coming right in the middle of the London rush; it has been so restful, so Arcadian."

"And so good for the complexion, this quiet," her mother added, with cordial offers of hospitality to Bassett.

"Poor dear Aunt Jess," Airedale mused aloud as they turned away. "She has six daughters, and her dearest ambition, next to getting them all well married, is to be mistaken for each of them in turn."

"I don't care," Blanche replied, "Aunt Jess is a dear, and not half so bad as she is painted."

"True, she is far better not painted at all, with neither rouge nor auricomus fluid. Go home, my dear Blanche, and thank Heaven on your bended knees that you are not a beauty."

"Thank you, my lord. Heaven defend us from plain men!"

"Surely, surely, Bassie, she wasn't huffed," he asked in blank bewilderment, when Blanche had disappeared in a gust of laughter within the sacred portals of the lady college.

"Perhaps she was wondering what has become of your Hibernian descent."

"Why, she knows very well that I haven't got it; it's only on the spindle side."

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"Ah! you will be obstructing progress in the House one of these days, after all. Is Lord Kilmeny poor?" —after a long pause.

"An Irish peer, a landowner living under a policy of pillage, forced to sell his best land at twopence an acre to tenants who have paid no rent for years, poor beggar!"

"Ah!" Bassett seemed much cheered by this sketch of Irish aristocracy.

"And are the—ladies likely to fulfil their mother's wishes?"

"Not yet, I fancy. Biddy, the eldest—she's the one who turns wheels——"

"Turns wheels? what, with a lathe?"

"With her body. Biddy is like a cat, made of india-rubber; she can do anything, shoot straight and ride straight, probably fight straight too. It is a sight to see Biddy turning wheels in perfect decorum and a trained skirt, and coming up smiling with not a curl out of place. She is always engaged—to somebody—can't stand monotony—and so is Eileen; so they don't count. But poor Aunt Jess has great hopes for Isobel, who has never been engaged. She only brought Isobel down here to bring the man to the point. They are going to Ascot in his four-in-hand, and after that she is sure there will be an announcement in the gossip rags."

"Oh!" said Adrian.

The world had suddenly cheapened and lost charm for him.

CHAPTER IV

BASSETT TOWERS

ABOUT this time Bassett's table was littered with the class of journal that Airedale called gossip rags, whence, from many a weltering chaos of creations in *crêpe de chine*, *poult de soie*, and other mystic and wonderful components of female dress, he disinterred, with *rivières* of diamonds and ropes of pearls still clinging to them, the names of the Earl and Countess Kilmeny, and the Ladies Bridget, Eileen, Isobel, and Patricia Mostyn, a meagre and unsatisfactory refecation at best, especially to one unversed in the mysteries of ruckings and tuckings, gages and accordion pleatings, panels and pans, and burnt straws (hitherto associated with quite other uses), or of gores and yokes, things suggestive rather of rustic toil than modish attire. Colour itself lost all hue in the jargon of these journals, for what could be made of a lady attired in tomato and cream, veiled in *eau de Nil*, or superbly gowned in oyster white or crushed strawberry *poult de soie*, or in peacock and olive hopsack—terms that occasionally baffle the untutored feminine intellect. It was embarrassing, almost provocative of a manly blush, to learn that these splendidly gowned ladies were daintily smocked, and hardly reassuring to find them sometimes attired in nun's veiling, still less in chiffon, which ears familiar with the French tongue persistently associated with rags and gutter rakings.

Some weeks' perusal of these journals left an impression on his mind of the Ladies Mostyn figuring at various

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functions as stacks of indescribable millinery, or peripatetic showrooms; but not in any such announcement as Airedale had predicted. So, as you can prove nothing from a negative, the distracted student at last shook himself together and boldly penned a note of congratulation to Lady Isobel on her approaching marriage. This was accompanied by a little volume, specially bound in vellum, of a poet she had wished to possess, containing a vignette of his own college and a sketch of the gardens with the sundial, hand-etched by the giver, and bound so as to face a poem on the "sweet city." This note contained a regret that the name of Isobel's betrothed was unknown to the writer, and notwithstanding that it had been written three or four times over by a university man, was entirely devoid of literary merit.

"I am afraid," Bassett told Airedale some days later, "I am very much afraid that I have contrived to offend your cousin."

"You must have put your back into it, then, if you mean Isobel, for she's not easily huffed," Airedale replied.

"I only congratulated her on her engagement," he sighed.

"Oh, did you?" asked Airedale, with sudden interest.

"Well, and how do you know you rubbed her the wrong way?"

"I gathered," was the hesitating answer, "I gathered it from something in her letter."

"Her letter? Ah, hum," nodding his head very wisely; "so Isobel slanged you in her last letter?"

"And her first," was the melancholy rejoinder. "You see, I didn't even know that she *was* engaged, much less who to."

"You don't say so?" with much surprise.

"So I couldn't congratulate *him*. I mean—I couldn't predict—Heaven knows what I mean. It was a sort of finesse, a diplomatic way of finding out whether she *really* was engaged, don't you know."

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"Very smart. I say, Bass, you know, you really should go in for the diplomatic service—you're made for it. Tell your governor you must."

"Oh, blow your chaff! As if I didn't know what an ass I was to miff it like that. Having met your cousin—I—I—I'm naturally interested in her."

"Nothing more natural or blameless. Though rather nearly related to this young person, I may without undue bounce assert that she is neither deformed nor an idiot, and is on the whole fairly well conducted. Youth and innocence appeal to our noblest instincts. Why blush for what does equal credit to your head and heart?"

"Oh, dry up! This is her letter. She begins—as usual—and thanks me for the book——"

"Ah! the book——"

"Yes—the book—just a—a little remembrance I sent her of her visit—that's all. The picture is just a scratch I made of the house—being yours, I thought it might interest her."

"Being *mine*—her loved, her illustrious kinsman—a happy touch that. Bassie, dear, you're far too good for this world."

"That's just what she says—'Quite too good of you to take such an interest in my—engagement'—the word came out with a deep sigh. "So it's true, Airedale, she is engaged—'after so slight an acquaintance'—I suppose it *was* cheek to congratulate her, but I didn't mean it—'By the time you have known people for a dozen years'—that's how she goes on—'no doubt you become sufficiently interested in them to remember with *whom* they are going to pass the remainder of their days.' Deeply offended, isn't she? Don't you know who the man is?"

"You thundering young fool!" shouted Airedale, with a roar that startled the college cat on the window-sill.

"What the—devil—is there to laugh at?" cried Adrian, furious.

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"Fie, duckie, only naughty boys use swear-words. 'The remainder of her days'—poor dear, very touch——" A sofa cushion clean in the face cut short his eloquence, and the incident terminated in a bear-fight, after which the gossip rags were consulted no more; and a kind note from Isobel's mother coming soon after and conveying the desired intelligence and an informal invitation, to be clinched in due time by a card, to the marriage of "our daughter, Eileen," brought great peace to Bassett's heart.

Adrian sometimes wondered why his spirit always died within him at sight of Bassett Towers, the darling of his father's heart, the toy of his leisure, the creation of his fancy, in part the result even of Adrian's, since he had been consulted again and again during the building, the whole of which was even now not completed. Of course it was too new; but everything has to be new once; only Bassett Towers was worse than new, it was sudden. The original house, a home of the Chesters, from whom Sir Daniel had bought the estate, was too old for comfort, much less for modern luxury, but not for beauty and interest. Sir Daniel's unexpected action in pulling it down had created a coolness that was almost hostility between Lord Somersby and himself; and that this did not grow to an actual rupture was owing to great self-restraint on the part of Lord Somersby, who, nevertheless, could not bring himself to set foot in Bassett Towers after the destruction of the home in which he had passed most of his boyhood.

"And yet I like old Bassett," the latter said to Airedale, who felt with his father, but less deeply, about the Towers, "though I never pass an hour with him without having my teeth set on edge. Adrian never sets one's teeth on edge. Now where is your heredity?"

"With our arboreal habits. Historic man no longer walks on all fours."

"I thought it took three generations to produce a gentleman, Airedale."

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"But not to revert to original gentility—if one may restore a fallen word to honour."

"True. One forgets that the Bassetts were a good old stock. This is often seen, that a family sinks for a generation and recovers itself—race always tells, whether in man or beast. Dan Bassett's father was a yeoman who came to poverty, and had to sell his land and work as a day labourer. He was a mason by trade. He went to London to better himself, and died in the struggle, leaving a widow and many young children, to keep whom Daniel entered on a mercantile career—mark the word 'career,' how it smacks of democratic pomposity! self-made men have neither lives nor histories, only careers—at the ripe age of ten. At forty he buys the dear old place of me, destroys and rebuilds it as Bassett Towers. Wipes out the very name. Well, the Bassetts can be traced in Norton Bassett for three centuries back. New men and old acres. When all's said and done, Dan Bassett is a remarkable man, even an admirable man. In his way a genius."

"A kind of genius most pleasing in absence; a magnetic attraction for dollars, nothing more."

"Did you ever hear him speak in the House, Airedale, or at a political meeting? It is marvellous. A man of no education, but wide information of a practical kind. He is quite a master of lucid statement, clear reasoning, practical deduction, and plain style, and he never mixes his metaphors."

Lord Somersby forgot to add that the worthy baronet seldom had any metaphors to mix, priding himself in all that he did on being what he called a plain man, looking down on "poetry and stuff."

The white turrets of Bassett Towers showed glittering above its dark woods on a hillside for miles round. The first gleam of the shining masonry never failed to warm Sir Daniel's heart when he saw it and lost it and caught it again, as his train wound in and out of cuttings and

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curves on his homeward journeys; it was the visible and tangible embodiment of his wealth, and his wealth meant his life's work, his accomplished dream and fulfilled ambition. He told himself that every stone in the walls, every mullion in the far-shining windows, every timber in the open-roofed hall, every marble and mosaic, picture and statue, every sumptuous hanging and rich carving, was the result of his own unaided labour—lifelong and strenuous, often bitter. His breast swelled with exultation when this embodiment of his energy and skill gradually revealed itself as he rolled smoothly and silently through the villages and within the park gates in his shining luxurious carriage, until the whole long front rose before his eyes, backed and surrounded by trees of at least a century's growth, its pointed turrets and gilded vanes piercing the sky, its wings and bays, its oriels and towers, blending and merging into one harmonious and symmetrical pile, that seemed to dominate half the county from the terrace on which it was throned, amid fountains and shrubs and ordered parterres ablaze with flowers of every season in turn.

He liked to remember himself a ragged, hunger-pinched boy, cadging about Covent Garden for a remnant of fruit or flowers flung him for next to nothing or charity, and turning a painful penny at odd times; and to think that that boy had made all the splendour that glittered before him. To build a fortune, to found a family, to restore the name of Bassett to more than its original pride, had scarcely been a dream in those far-off days, when the cruel and immediate pinch of want had blocked all but the thought of its quick relief from his mind. His earliest dream had been the honest, affectionate desire to help his mother in her need, then to bring her back to the homely comfort so often regretted in his hearing, back to the pleasant, wholesome country, to some cosy cottage or farm, where moderate toil would keep a cheerful home together, and he, by diligence and skill, would rise in life

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and start the younger ones in good trades and put by enough to give his mother a restful and cheery old age. Then came the memory of the dead father's tales of the Bassetts, of their tombs and traditions in Norton Bassett, of the evil days on which they had fallen, and how—before his own personal ill-fortunes—he had looked to bring back the family repute, and see his children reinstated in the place whence their fathers had fallen. Dan, as the eldest, had felt bound to carry out that purpose so cruelly foiled in the father's own case.

From such memories the sight of Bassett Towers, glowing from roof to basement in the sunshine, was like a stroke of enchantment, a fairy splendour almost beyond possibility. Tears gathered in his eyes sometimes at the thought that his mother could never see the Towers, much less dream of the treasures collected beneath their stately roofs. She had seen the foundations ; if she could but have lived to see the flag floated from the roof-tree ! Success so often delays till no one is left to care for it, and the full-brimmed cup so long anticipated is more bitter than sweet to the taste. But that had not been Dan Bassett's portion ; his mother had seen more of his success than she could believe in, except as a fairy vision that some day must suddenly fade, she thought, and send her back to her washtub and hungry children and hard-earned crust in the dreary slum of her early widowhood. Evelyn had seen the flag floating not only from the bare roof-tree, but from the finished topmost tower ; but—Evelyn had not cared much for this stone darling of his ; wealth had weighed upon her like a burden, she had never worn it proudly like a crown. She had often said that she was not born to it, and, having been bred in poverty, felt more at home in a cottage than a palace. Evelyn ! gently born and softly nurtured, and so far above him, in the rose-covered parsonage, her home, that he had scarcely dared to ask her to share his modest fortunes, and hesitated long in spite of his great love. She

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had asked to be buried under green turf, by the remote village church where she was wed, tacitly refusing the costly tomb he would have loved to pile upon her ; nevertheless, such a memorial as few women have ever had was rising by the little church he had built among the trees, a sumptuous chapel of inlaid marbles and gold mosaics and jetted roofs—a monument fit for a queen.

One glowing August afternoon, when a light breeze brought the spiced breath of carnation into the house, Sir Daniel (every inch a Sir) stepped lightly from his luxurious carriage and firmly up the steps of Bassett Towers through an army of respectful servants, into a hall full of marbles and gleaming statues, sumptuously cushioned divans and many flowers.

The master and builder of the Towers was tall and strongly built, with a well-featured, rather florid face, and a great shock of iron-grey hair brushed off a massive forehead. His mouth was full, but very firm ; a short grey beard softened the squareness of his jaw ; his light blue eyes, deep-set under bushy brows, were keen, intelligent, and often restless. Everything about him conveyed an impression of power, which a genial smile and address only just redeemed from overbearing masterfulness. He had the look of beatific, full-fed content, that marks the self-made man of millions, but the grey-blue eyes sometimes emitted lightnings that proclaimed the fighting man.

“Has Mr. Bassett arrived?” was his first, unconsciously eager, question, upon the negative answer to which his face fell, and he strode from hall to hall in gloomy silence to a dainty room hung with pale blue brocade, looking through a deep bay window that was a room in itself, upon the blazing parterres and turf of the terrace, and thence down to the village and church of Norton Bassett and across a wide sweep of undulating country, fading into level blue distance and bounded by hills on the right and left.

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A woman, who might have been any age between three-and-twenty and forty, rose at his entrance, and lifted her face to kiss the rough cheek he submitted to her with an affectionate growl of response.

"When is Adrian coming?" he asked. "Confound this university settlement fad, Phyllis! To keep the boy grilling among East-enders all through July and August, catching every kind of disease and losing everything—Ascot, Henley, yachting, grouse! He might as well sit on a stool in a city office on twenty bob a week. And when the young villain consents to run down to the Towers for a week-end, and I postpone parliamentary business and all kinds of important meetings and rush down by the afternoon express to meet him, the first thing I hear is that his lordship has 'not yet arrived,'"—mimicking the servant's pomposity.—"He'll scarcely be in time for dinner, now, confound him!"

Sir Daniel paced the room angrily, looking down, observant of nothing, his hands in his pockets—till he cannoned against a little girl with long yellow hair, who had run in from the terrace through the window, over the sill of which she had climbed. He only saved her from a fall by catching her up, kissing and shaking and pretending to scold her, and then set her laughing on her feet again.

"I am sorry, Uncle Dan," Phyllis said, taking away the child, who was clinging to his coat, noisily asking what he had brought her, and giving her a sign to be silent; "of course, you remember that Adrian was not quite well in the beginning of the week."

"So he said, the graceless scamp, to excuse himself from the dinner at which he knew he was particularly wanted," he grumbled, turning a sudden restless glance upon her. "Well?" he added sharply.

She took an opened telegram from a writing-table in the bay. "This came half an hour ago," she said, pressing the child's golden head against her waist and looking anxiously in her uncle's eyes, which had widened and

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flashed. "Adrian is still—unwell," she added, with a faint shudder as he stepped nearer to her, a shadow deepening on his suddenly ageing face. "He has developed—typhoid—of a mild type," she added, half scared by the heavy stamp and short sharp exclamation evoked by the word.

"Give it to me," he cried, snatching the paper and turning his back to her while he read.

"Run away, Murie," she whispered to the child, who flitted out into the sunshine with instant, joyous obedience, while her mother anxiously studied Sir Dan's broad back outlined upon the sunny windows, the blinds of which were partially drawn, seeing in it more pathos than is often perceptible in faces.

CHAPTER V

THE BRIDGE-PLAYERS

"**T**YPHOID," Sir Daniel repeated softly, after a lengthy pause ; but the word sounded like a knell, and when he turned, Phyllis saw that his face was grey and drawn.

"Of a mild type," she tremblingly added.

"Damn the type, and the settlement, and the slums, and this infernal fad ; damn the whole thing," he said, with quiet and comprehensive intensity.

"Adrian is young—and strong, Uncle."

"The infernal fever always takes—the young—and strong—the *best*"—his full lip quivered.

"It is a mild type—everything is in his favour—no excess—no overstrain."

"Who knows ? He writes poetry. There may be a woman in it !"

"No worry—a good constitution—a healthy, regular life——"

"In the slums, in August ? You don't know slum life in August, Phyllis ; I *do*," with sad emphasis.

"It didn't quite kill you," she said, smiling and putting her hands caressingly on his strong, square shoulders. "Dear Uncle Dan, this will need a few weeks' patience and care, a few weeks followed by an easy and quick convalescence, without any complications."

"An only son," he said, as if that were in itself a dangerous symptom. "Gerald died of typhoid too."

"Poor dear Gerald ; weakened by war and wounds and

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bad food, and in a field hospital in that climate! Now Adrian will have every care and attention——”

“That money can buy,” he added fiercely. “He shall not stay in that place, I’ll go to him by the next train.”

“Uncle Dan, you will do nothing of the kind,” she said, as he started from the chair in which he had sunk in despondence, gently pressing him back into it. “You could do nothing but worry him—he is to be kept quiet. He has two special nurses, first-rate nurses, and the best medical attendance. See! Blanche Ingram writes fully—she wrote this morning——”

“Blanche—who?”

“A cousin of Lord Kilmeny, daughter of Archdeacon Ingram. She has to do with the settlement.”

“Blast the settlement! What has she to do with my poor boy?” he cried, going to the writing-table and filling up one telegraph form after another with careful economy of words while he spoke. “He’ll marry some female in a Salvation bonnet, if he recovers. Think of it, Phyllis! The handsomest fellow under the sun, heir to everything I possess, with all the ways that women like, a look as if he worshipped the whole lot, and a voice like—like strawberries and cream. What a match he might make—marry the only child of some duke, the title dying out, and restored through her husband by Royal Letters Patent—at an age when a boy must marry or go the pace, and Adrian’ll never do that, he, to be exposed to the machinations of smirking Sunday-school teachers and frumpish district visitors! And the girls he might have met this season in any Christian place. Even that pretty little Irish girl coming to-day, and half in love with him already. She took his attentions very graciously at Oxford, I hear. If ever honey was spilt on the ground—there! what think o’ that?” handing her his sheaf of telegraphic commands—to prepare to receive the patient at his father’s town house; to call in the most noted physicians of the hour; to provide for

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various contingencies ; and to demand hourly telegrams here, and later on in town.

"Very good. You can do nothing now but possess your soul in patience," she replied, handing them to a servant who came in answer to the bell. "Go and have a cigar. I can receive the people. After this upset you will not be expected to appear. There !"

A discordant bellowing, as of a distressed cow with no ear for music, was succeeded by a prolonged and rapid gravel-raking, and a dark and shapeless body flashing by, suddenly stopped with a series of demisemiquaver pantings, and was followed by a wall of dust, which—drifting with stench of mineral oil through breezy open windows, across the carnation spices, and encrusting marquetry, delicate upholstery, and inlay work with a layer of gravel—proclaimed the arrival of guests. Muriel, who was playing by the central entrance, perceived through the dust-cloud two flat-capped figures like huge goblin crustacea with goggle eyes and bodies enclosed in shells, accompanied by two mummified creatures wrapped in dun cerements, their heads swathed in pink and crimson silk.

These alighting and passing into the cool hall, there emerged from one of the crustacean shells the honest face and square-set figure of Lord Airedale, and from the mummy casings the laughing eyes and slim figure of Isobel Mostyn and the stately presence of Lady Somersby, whose attire was to her shed casing as the peacock butterfly's powdery plumage to his chrysalis hull.

Hardly had these been welcomed, when another bellowing, evil-smelling monster discharged its freight of lobster-eyed ogres and drab mummies at the door, and was succeeded by the stately and shining apparition of a pair of lovely, soft-eyed horses with tossing manes and twinkling feet, and behind them a comely and comfortable vehicle, whence issued clean and fairly personable human beings in summer dress. These were followed by various

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conveyances, until the cool and shadowy hall, opening on to a thickly shaded part of the terrace, was pervaded by an unceasing murmur of voices, a rustle of silk, and tinkle of tea-cups and ice-plates.

Phyllis had not recovered from her grief at the absence of Lord Somersby, occasioned, as Lady Somersby airily explained and Airedale, with the deep crimson of conscious lying, corroborated, by the unexpected arrival of a London solicitor on urgent affairs (though, as Airedale had reminded his mother and Phyllis remembered distinctly, that solicitor had done duty more than once on Lord Somersby's non-appearance at the Towers), when Baron Hildenheim, the great financier, with a broad and beaming Baroness, and a heavy-lidded and aquiline-featured son and daughter, was announced; so that there was quite an assembly before Sir Daniel's absence could be explained.

"My uncle is a little upset by a telegram," Phyllis said, "so I made him go to his study for an hour."

"Where's Adrian?" Airedale broke in, amid various expressions of regret; "I thought Adrian was coming for the week-end."

The Somersby party had, in fact, been with difficulty induced to come for the express purpose of meeting him.

"We had quite hoped to find Adrian here," Lady Somersby said. "What new austerities is that bad boy practising, dear Mrs. Thornton? Is it wicked to see one's friends, or is a cup of tea a sinful luxury?"

"Sins and luxuries to which poor Adrian was greatly looking forward," Phyllis sighed, glancing accidentally at Isobel, who was listening with a sweet but slightly forced smile to the staccato eloquence of the younger Hildenheim, and whose eyes emitted a quick spark as of passing terror that referred to nothing in Mr. Hildenheim's discourse. "Foolish boy, he has contrived, as his poor father always predicted he would, to catch some illness in the slums, and is unable to come down to-day."

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"No, I'm never guilty of hats at *matinées*," Isobel was saying to Mr. Hildenheim ; "pure selfishness, more comfortable without."

"I say," cried Airedale, "I hope to goodness it isn't diphtheria."

"Not diphtheria," Phyllis said, carefully filling the teapot, on which her eyes were fixed, "only a mild attack of typhoid ; but the very word upsets my poor uncle."

"Only typhoid !" cried Airedale. "By George, Mrs. Thornton, do you know what typhoid involves, even in its mildest form ?"

"Don't I ?" she sighed, now filling the cups. Isobel's attention was attracted just then by the flight of some white pigeons across the sunny blue ; she had risen and stood in an open window to see them, leaving Mr. Hildenheim furious at what he called her stand-offishness, and determined to cast no more pearls before Christian swine, however attractive and aristocratic they might be. The elder Hildenheim had been a clothier, report said second-hand.

Lady Somersby watched Isobel with an anxiety lulled by the statuesque set of her niece's head and shoulders, until all that was proper had been said on the illness and absence of the son of the house, and the talk had settled back with little eddies and ripples into a meaningless flow of commonplace, when Isobel, having given all her cake to an importunate peacock parading outside, returned, smiling over the bird's greediness, for some more.

Sir Daniel was himself again, before very long, and able to give his customary genial, not to say exuberant, welcomes, wringing weaker hands and patting narrower shoulders than his own, and shutting both Isobel's slender white hands in one of his huge paws with a downright "Glad to see you here, my dear, your first visit to the Towers. I've raked many a pretty thing into the place, but nothing to come up to such a fresh young

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face and laughing eyes as yours." Yet Isobel, in nowise disconcerted, only smiled and made some pleasant reply.

"I like Sir Daniel," she said to Airedale; "he is genuine and unconventional and warm-hearted. And if he does bounce, he does it quite openly—no pretence, no insolence, no self-consciousness. 'Here am I,' he says quite honestly, 'once a wretched little starved street-cadger, standing upon a tower of sovereigns piled up by my own hands; and blow me if I can help wondering how the deuce I did it.' He walks about in a realized fairy-tale, and is never tired of admiring his caves full of rubies, and trees covered with boughs of gold and fruit of pearl and emerald."

"Isobel," said Airedale severely—it was late evening, and they stood on the terrace in the cool starlight—"you are that man's guest, you have just been feasting on his fairy fruits and drinking of his magic cup."

"And thoroughly enjoying it," she retorted unabashed. "But what I enjoy most in this house," she added, "is the dear old man himself; his kindness, his naturalness, his warmth of heart and intelligence. Even when he says things one would think atrocious in others his manner makes them go down."

"And the subconsciousness of his millions, Isobel."

"Oh! my good Jim, for pity's sake don't try to be subtle, you're not built for it. Besides," she added, following some thread of reasoning imperceptible to him, "he's really a handsome old fellow, and well groomed, which is more than you can say of the Baron."

"Oh! the Baron! I could wish that blessed Baron and his fair daughter in a better place, Isobel."

She sighed and slipped her hand into his arm in sympathy.

"Look here," he said after a pause, during which the lines on his forehead deepened, "you'll stand by me in that matter, eh?"

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"Through thick and thin," she replied, turning to go in with a cheerful good night.

Next morning, being Sunday, there was a sharp division of the party into sheep and goats, the former, including the bulk of the womenkind, going decorously churchward, mostly on foot, the distance being very short and the way pleasant and shady. Isobel found herself walking with her host—a downright flirtation, her aunt averred—hearing the latest bulletin of Adrian, and entering into the old man's anxieties and impatience.

"I had typhoid once," she said, smiling, as if having typhoid were among the gayest of human experiences, "and look at me now."

Again in white, white carnations and myrtle in her belt, a dazzle of laughter in her eyes, and rose and peach bloom in her face, she stood by a mossy wall on the terrace steps above him, one hand leaning on a white sunshade, the other patting the neck of a peacock strutting before her, half bold and half shy, his glorious greens and blues and golds shimmering and changing in broad sunlight, and his long folded sheaf of tail feathers trailing on the step. Dark myrtles pearled with bloom threw her graceful young figure into clearer whiteness, an August sky dazzled in blue clarity above her, rich hues of roses and carnations, deep purples and scarlets of salvia and many a flame-hued flower, made the air tingle with warm odour; through all the slow chiming of church bells was like the soft pulsation of a higher life than that in the bees' drowsy content and rooks' solemn caw, or even the wind's faint whisper through summer-leaved boughs. "And look at me now," she said.

Sir Daniel looked, and took in every detail from the firm and slender foot to the graceful poise of the fine head. More than the Hebe bloom of health and young beauty touched the self-raised man of millions; he perceived the charm of race and high breeding in every word and look, a graciousness, a refined audacity, a quickness of

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wit, a supple and natural ease, impossible to acquire, born in the blood and bred in the bone, like the speed of a racehorse—or at least so he fancied.

"Hardly a wreck," she added, "though I can't tie myself up in knots on the trapezium like my sister Biddy, or play hockey like the others. But I can hunt—over Irish fences—four days a week, and dance all night afterwards without turning a hair."

"You are worth looking at," he said. "I only wish my poor boy could see you."

She bent to stroke the peacock's shimmering breast, and then laughed to see him stumble angrily away. "Here comes my aunt," she said, looking up at a rustle of silk on the grassy walk, "bringing up the rearguard. She hates being in church before the service begins. Now I like to be early."

There was a flutter of flying curls in the sunlight and Muriel raced up breathless, slipped a hand into Isobel's and hurried her on. Sir Dan trusted in a child's liking for a stranger, it was always one mark to the good, and beamed benevolence upon them from the depth of a long day-dream. Lady Isobel Bassett had a pleasant sound. He would give them his great stone darling to be the cradle of the new race of Mostyn Bassetts. With his wealth, Adrian's talents, and Isobel's birth, a petty baronetcy would be miserably inadequate. By the time they reached the churchyard gate and passed through the lane of respectfully saluting fellow-worshippers, Isobel's bright hair had been crowned in his imagination by a succession of coronets with ever-increasing balls, and when they stepped into the church, her unconscious brow wore the strawberry leaves—her country's recognition of the genius and public services of a husband as yet not even a suitor.

Of those goats who squandered the Sunday hours at home, heedless of church bells, Baron Hildenheim was most in evidence. Coolly clad and well supplied with

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cigars, iced drinks, and clean packs of cards, he was serenely happy beneath a broad, thick-leaved chestnut. Tables of a green made sickly by the live greens around were set in the shade, and only the fall of cards, chink of coin, and grave short speech of the bridge-players, was heard above the whisper of the rustling breeze and chirp of grasshoppers. Lady Somersby had looked longingly at this group from the rearguard going to church and the vanguard coming home, and no sooner was the temporary interruption of luncheon over and the Baron's return to the green tables possible, than she joined the blissful company, which was augmented by other church-goers, and was quickly lost to everything but the changes and chances, the delirious hopes and dark despairs, of bridge.

Airedale hovered persistently round her, suggesting more alluring pastimes to a deaf ear, till a triumphant "grand slam" from his mother drove him off with a subdued growl and despairing shrug.

"Everybody plays," Sir Daniel told him, with misplaced sympathy; "men and women, week days and Sundays. I don't play on Sundays because—well, I don't." But Airedale divined that loyalty to his dead wife's dislike of Sunday cards kept the old man from the green tables during the Sabbath hours.

"I say, Airedale, is it true that Adrian might have been in the Varsity Eight?" Sir Daniel asked him as they turned from these Arcadian joys. "Why the dickens did he miss the Blue?"

"I think he would tell you, sir, that he was reading at the time."

"Reading? Stuff! As if men go to college to read. As if he couldn't read anywhere and everywhere, but he'll never again get the chance of the Blue Ribbon. What was the real reason? Some religious fad? The race interferes with Lent, eh?"

"Hardly that. But you know his ideas of balance and all-round training—mind and body, emotion and

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intellect ; nothing to be developed at the expense of anything else."

"Oh, Lord ! The stroke of his college, and to miss the Blue !"

"He says they overtrain. It must be either mind or muscle. You can't have it both ways. He never cared even at Eton to watch or win a race. 'Somebody must win,' he used to say ; 'as well one as the other.' He doesn't want to row better than other men, he only wants to row well. Queer notion."

"I never did anything I didn't want to do better than everybody else," Sir Daniel grumbled, letting Muriel, who was following him, pull him into a shady seat and sit on his knee. "That's how I made my pile," he chuckled. "That unlucky boy of mine will never make any money."

"Well, perhaps he'll make the money fly," Airedale said hopefully.

"What's a money-fly ? Is it a money-spinner's dinner ?" Muriel asked, lifting up a fold of her frock in which one of those insects had fallen.

"Oh, Lord !" cried Sir Dan, jumping up, deathly pale, and dropping the astonished child, and disappearing into the distance before Airedale had time to pick up and reassure Muriel.

"He was frightened to death," she chuckled, when she had got over her first impulse to cry on becoming conscious of Airedale's amused wonder at this revelation of innate weakness in a breast of granite, and was being carried off on his shoulder down the terrace steps.

"Here's an imp of mischief," he said, setting her down when they came upon Isobel, who was breathlessly dodging two sets of tennis players hunting high and low for her.

"That dreadful Jacob Hildenheim is playing," she said ; "luckily he can't run, but I'm nearly done."

"Oh ! can't he though, after a Daphne !" cried Aire-

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dale ; " there he is ! Quick ! Behind the yew hedge for your lives ! "

Down they crouched, stifled with laughter and gloating over the audible panting and puffing of the unlucky swain who had just come to pause on the other side of the hedge.

" She runs like seven hundred devils," he muttered, surveying the wide prospect below the terrace in every direction, while he mopped his streaming face and rolled his white flannels above his elbows ; " I could have sworn I saw her white gown whisk down the steps," he pumped. " Aggravating young cat ! Beauty ? Pff ! A bit too scraggy for *my* taste. Wait till I marry you, you green-eyed, long-limbed cat ; you'll find Jacob Hildenheim a tougher customer than you think. You just wait," he emphasized, with a sudden turn and a fist shaken at the hedge.

" Oh, Airedale," cried Isobel, when he was gone and they emerged breathless and hysterical from their hiding-place, " that I should live to be called scraggy by a Jew boy ! "

" You just wait till he marries you ! " shouted Airedale. " Oh, Lord ! "

" Oh, I can wait, I can wait quite well. A green-eyed cat ! Oh ! "

" If he'd only known how jolly near he was to a thundering good kicking ! Don't let on, Muriel ; don't tell tales, or the fairies'll pinch you black and blue."

" Take me away, Jim," Isobel cried ; " take me down to the Memorial Chapel, hide me away from all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics. None of them will be that way, and I must see more of the lions."

" I'll take you both," Muriel said, with a grand air. " But vere isn't any lions in the Morial, only pigs and cows outside."

It was very cool and pleasant among the shadowy marble columns and inlaid vaults of the sumptuous little building, full of sculptures and mosaics of the good deeds

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of good women in all ages, which surrounded the still white effigy of the sweet-faced woman who seemed to sleep peacefully in the centre.

But what was wrong with the rich man's tribute to the memory of his lost wife? they wondered when they came out. Aggressively expensive, artistically poor and curiously jarring, it might be, but in different speech and another manner it told the same tale as the *Taj Mahal* and the *Chère Reine* crosses. Isobel looked long at the white marble dome rising above the trees, when they were on the terraces again, and wondered much. Airedale showed her a little garden half hidden by jutting walls, forming a bay open to the south, a regular trap for sun. Two simple borders, filled with old-fashioned perennials and roses, were divided by a turf walk, ending in a thatched summer-house, overgrown with honeysuckle and almond-scented clematis; espalier apple trees backed one border and pears and figs grew on the wall of another, with here a myrtle and there, in a sunny nook, a lemon verbena with woody stems, survivors of many winters.

"It was her own little garden," he said, showing some gardening tools in a corner; "she did it all herself. He has it kept up just as she left it. Sometimes she gave us tea here. Adrian digs it now when he is down."

They found the bridge-players, their tables shifted from the changing sunlight, intent as ever, their eyes chained to cards and markers, their thoughts absorbed. Lady Somersby's handsome face had a fatigued eagerness; she was quite unconscious of the Baron's cigar-smoke, which eddied slowly round her.

"Oh, my dear boy, don't bother," she cried pettishly at Airedale's suggestion of tea outside the music-room, where the great Hungarian violinist was playing; "they are sending us tea here."

"Ach! yes," added the Baron impatiently. "Tea, iced coffee—everything—no trumps? Ha!"

It was no use; Isobel's attempt was equally futile; they

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had to give it up, and wandered disconsolately away to find Sir Dan busy collecting people for musical tea.

Isobel thought of the marble-columned monument and the little garden. "Who would suspect him of it?" she murmured to Airedale, when she looked at Sir Dan's strong, keen-eyed face. "And yet, there is more than a suggestion of his son in his great hard face."

Airedale smiled. It occurred to him that suggestions of Adrian were by no means wanting in that house, from many a wall of which his face smiled, now as a baby, now as a child at play, now as a cherry-cheeked Eton boy in flannels and cap, or as a bridal page in white satin. There were two recent full-lengths, one of a youth in flannels with a racquet, the other of a sportsman with a gun and dogs. Neither was quite like the Greek faun, or the young man in Marshland's painting, yet all had something that was reflected in Mrs. Thornton and little Muriel. The latter still clung to Isobel.

"She is tiring you, Lady Isobel," said her mother, herself a little worn by an afternoon of such exertion as won her the reputation of being a good hostess; "her German governess is on holiday and Mademoiselle has one of her migraines, else she would not be let loose upon people like this. Do put her down. Your blood be on your own head then," she added, with a smile of pleasure.

Isobel's caressing hand had pushed away a wave of hair that was brushed with careful carelessness low across the child's forehead and disclosed a jagged long-healed scar. "Darling, what is this?" she cried, horrified.

"Vat's what faver did," the child said tranquilly, "when he was funny. Frew poor Murie against a table, and made a hole in her."

"Oh! how could he?" burst from Isobel's shocked and sickened heart.

"He couldn't never help fings when he was funny," Muriel gravely explained. "Lots of sense ran out. Vat's why poor Murie can't never 'member fings like other girls,"

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she sighed, shaking the hair back over her pretty little angel face. Isobel caught the little head to her breast, kissed it, and looking up, shocked and grieved, surprised a sad expression on Phyllis Thornton's face, where the long-drawn weariness of patient suffering had left its mark.

Vague memories of a Thornton divorce, whispers of which had penetrated even to the Mostyn schoolroom, helped her to piece out the details of a sordid, everyday tragedy that turned her blood to think of.

"Look, darling, look at the butterfly," she said, and the child was off like a kitten among the shrubs, before the startled silence evoked by her sudden revelation was covered by the first notes of the Kr utzer Sonata.

"She's always letting it out," Airedale told her later, "and they daren't stop her. There's pressure on the brain or something. But—poor Mrs. Thornton!"

Once more Airedale went to the bridge tables, only to find a woman with glittering eyes and burning cheeks, deaf and blind to everything but the game, whom he scarcely recognized as his mother.

"You promised," he said at last, "to accompany Isobel. They are waiting for her to sing." No answer.

"Mother, mother, you promised," he murmured to deaf ears, and at last turned away sick at heart, with a despairing stamp on the turf. Then, slowly, as if waking from a dream, she raised her head and looked at him with eyes dulled and drowsed like an opium-eater's. Perhaps the pain in his face roused her, for the score dropped from her hands and her colour changed. She looked at the cards and sighed. Then she looked at the Baron, who was never much to look at, and, at this melting moment of invading sunbeams, distinctly greasy; then she looked at the other tables and observed a bird-of-prey sharpness ageing some faces and a fierce excitement fevering others. The impulse to recover her losses was sharp, but the impatient snapping of the pack of cards in the Baron's fat

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hands jarred horribly on her nerves, and at last she rose with a smile and a gracious word and swept slowly away on Airedale's arm.

But Isobel's accompaniments once played, no power could keep her in the house; her steps turned, against her will, almost against her knowledge, in the direction of the chestnuts, and bore her back to the terrible fascination of the green tables.

"If only Adrian were here!" Airedale sighed in despairing impotence.

CHAPTER VI*

MYRTLE AND VERBENA

DAWN glowed richly in a primrose and chrysolite sky, curdling into cloudlets of scarlet and gold, and struggled faintly with the hard electric light upon the absorbed faces of four people, who were playing bridge in a satin-hung room with open, uncurtained windows.

A yawning, heavy-eyed servant came in and ostentatiously turned off the lights, rousing the Baron to the admission that it was to-morrow morning already, and making Lady Somersby's haggard face and out-wearied eyes look more ghastly than ever. She shivered in the balmy morning air that stole through the windows, and drew the feathery wrap that covered her shoulders close up to her chin.

"Just as my luck was beginning to turn," she muttered piteously, cutting the cards and dealing by herself, when the other players rose from the table with suppressed yawns and chink of coins raked into pockets.

The Baron smiled unctuously. "We give you revenge another time," he said, sweeping a mass of gold and papers serenely from the table. "To-day I have board meetings and businesses, so I must sleep a little now, else they catch me napping then. What a night we did make of it. *Du Himmel!* And yesterday; was that a day?"

Eighteen hours on end, with brief interruptions for meals, had afforded refreshing sabbatical repose to the worthy Baron, whose benignant and shining countenance glowed with conscious rectitude, as he went chuckling

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through the shadowy, sleeping house to, well-earned slumber and dreams musical with the chink of coin and crisp rustle of notes. Of the three players who had lasted till dawn, Lady Somersby hated him the most; the others looked weary, disreputable, and bilious, but the bird-of-prey features of the Baron shone serene as ever, and the long hair fringing his bald head was unruffled. During the subsequent sunny hours of wakeful tossing on her bed, that complacent aquiline face haunted and persecuted poor Lady Somersby, driving away the sweet forgetfulness of the sleep she vainly courted.

"Never again," she confided to her comfortless pillow, "never again will I touch a card."

Many pillows had received the same sturdy resolve, emphasized by the vicious thumps and punches commonly dealt to sleepless pillows. The Confessions of a Pillow might furnish exciting reading.

Another pillow in that house supported another un-resting head, whose fitful sleep was troubled by dreams of a sick and suffering, perhaps even dying, youth. Sometimes the sufferer had the face of the dead Gerald, sometimes the features of the younger, living son—again it was the face of a young brother, dead half a century ago.

"Restless night, temperature 108," was the first bulletin that roused Sir Daniel from his broken sleep. The next told the same tale, the next spoke of less delirium and slower pulse.

And when the day was well begun, and the day nurse came on duty in Adrian's room, she noticed unusual fatigue and harassed lines in the night nurse's face.

"Look here," the latter whispered, baring her arm and showing a ring of bruises on it, "he was all but out of window with me twice. I was about done when the valet came to the rescue."

They looked with pity, tempered by professional use, at the restless figure plucking at the sheets on the bed, and then at each other. Adrian was staring stupidly at

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nothing and asking pathetically why no one came to help. "The misery is so awful," he muttered hoarsely, "and the degradation."

"Poor boy, that has been the cry all night," the nurse said softly. "Hush, dearie," she added, putting fresh wetted bandages to the burning head, "they are all happy now, quite happy. There, there!"

A gleam of intelligence brightened the glassy eyes, and the night nurse, stroking the patient's hand till her fingers glided to the pulse, nodded cheerfully to the other and slipped from the room.

"But just think of the idiocy," she said, handing her report to the doctor and contemptuously pointing to some letters and a packet, "of sending parcels to a man in his condition."

He took the small box and weighed it in his hand.

"A woman's hand," he said, "postmark, Norton Bassett. Flowers from home. I'll take it in and chance it."

"Suppose it is a love business and sets him off again?"

"It won't do that."

He took the packet in, placed it within sight of the pillow, and began that impersonal, professional scrutiny of the patient that makes him, if conscious, feel that his regal human responsibility is already abdicated and he has sunk to a mere collection of damaged organs and deranged functions.

Adrian stared fixedly back at him, consciousness faintly dawning in his dull glance; an encouraging smile from the doctor drew the reflection of a smile from the patient, as when one smiles in an infant's face. An inquiry for his health evoked a hoarse reply that it was good, at which the doctor nodded with cheerful satisfaction and silently continued his scrutiny, the nurse standing silently by, while a blind flapped in the breeze and the London roar sounded softened to a hum.

Presently the restless head on the pillow rolled in the

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direction of the packet, a look of interest pierced the face like a dart, and gradually, as if with struggle and effort, consciousness returned to the drawn features. Preventing the feeble hand that moved towards it, the doctor tore the cover from the little box, opened it, and disclosed some sprays of lemon verbenâ and a few myrtle boughs just breaking into bloom, and laid them on the bed within reach.

Adrian's strained gaze rested long on the scented leaves with a wistfulness that merged in content ; a faint smile calmed his harassed face, his hot eyes grew misty. Then his eyelids closed and he sank into a doze. They wondered if he had read the paper inside the lid of the box—

"From Lady Bassett's Garden.

I. M."

—or if he knew to whom those initials belonged, or what visions of dewy freshness and cool peace, or what sweet and comforting memories, the sight of those fresh and fragrant sprays called up.

They put the verdant messengers in water on a table near, with the paper stamped with the Bassett Towers address. And all day, between fitful dozes and lapses from consciousness, the patient's eyes turned upon the budded myrtle and verbenâ with wistfulness merging in content.

Subsequent bulletins were more and more hopeful ; and when Sir Daniel arrived in the afternoon, he was allowed to stand within the open door and look upon the hope of his life, stretched helpless and half conscious upon the bed, murmuring fitfully of mother and Isobel and the garden on the south terrace.

Then, drawing his great strong hand across his face, he moved softly from the door, unperceived by Adrian, and looked out of the window of the next room.

"And you call that *better*," he growled in a fierce, hoarse voice, turning suddenly and angrily to the nurse, as if she were guilty of the sickness.

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"Much better," was the smiling answer.

Then Sir Daniel hardened his heart and looked in once more at the sight that angered as much as it distressed him, and a great terror fell upon him and brought cold drops upon his brow. He remembered the little brother he had seen die of this fever, and the young sister who had faded away, her health undermined by privation and hardship; he thought of Gerald in his distant soldier's grave, and of the insidious weakness that had robbed him of his wife, and his stout heart shook; for he knew that he was face to face with an enemy against which the wealth of all the world was powerless.

"Can nothing more be done?" he asked the eminent physician, who was accustomed to finger the pulses and pronounce the dooms of royalty. "No expense is to be spared, *nothing* that money can buy."

The physician looked the father straight in the eyes, finding a strange pathos in this unquestioning trust in the power of money.

"There is little to do," he replied slowly, "only to give fair play to nature. Here we have in mortal combat, on the one side youth and strength, and on the other a deadly poison. We can only stand by and hold the sponge."

"Here," corrected Sir Daniel, "we have my only son, sick to death of what killed his brother."

It was bitter to think of his early passionate struggle to drag himself and those he loved out of that huge dark welter of London poverty; bitter to think of his youth spent and manhood consumed in efforts to rise higher and ever higher out of the reach of those devouring waves; most bitter that this boy, born and reared on a height so secure, should of his own will fling himself back into that seething turmoil and drink its death.

"His life is so valuable," he pleaded; "such a career is before him, so much depends upon him."

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"We are doing our best," the physician said gently, "the fever must run its course."

"You are keeping something back, Sir Andrew," he cried, suspicion darkening his eyes, "some unfavourable symptom, some latent weakness coming out. Man, man, tell me the worst."

His great hand closed fiercely on the physician's arm ; who winced and unlocked the gripping fingers.

"No. I have been quite candid. I never saw any one with a better chance of pulling through. He has—you see I am quite candid—rather more delirium than his condition seems to warrant, that is all. Has there been—ah!—any mental shock?—any unhappiness?—he looks younger than his age—any crossing in love?—boys sometimes take female cruelty seriously to heart, especially good boys."

"Great Heaven! Is that a face or a figure to inspire female cruelty? And as for unhappiness or shock—he has never had a cross or a denial in his life."

"Poor lad!"

"He took his mother's death to heart and his brother's—as any boy would—but that was years ago."

"Well! so much the better," was the cheery reply. "Don't fret over nothing. Good-bye, good-bye."

He was gone, leaving Sir Daniel to wonder if the great man realized what it cost in care and thought to bring up such a man as his son, or if it were possible to convey to him any conception of the hopes resting upon the life of this brilliant and cultured youth.

Sir Dan had taken up his quarters within call; and coming home in the small hours, looked in on the patient before going to bed.

"The misery is so awful, so gigantic," he heard in a faint, terrified voice from the bed, "the misery is so awful—and the degradation—after two thousand years, two thousand—thousand——"

Sir Daniel had been standing in the shadow, listening

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in a silence just stirred by the sick man's painful breathing and uneasy movements, and the sudden utterance of this low repeated complaint in that unnatural voice had a weird and ghastly effect upon him; it made his blood turn and his flesh creep.

Misery to this darling of fortune? degradation to this fine young fellow, whose only fault was having none? He shivered as he listened to the phantom voice moaning its low complaint from the darkened bed, on which lay something that was not Adrian and yet was all the son he had. He went softly to the bed and bent down.

"Addie," he said, "Addie, don't you know me?"

There was no response, only the repeated complaint. At last, towards morning, the old man's persistent effort woke a gleam of consciousness in him, and a faint exclamation of "Daddy, daddy," as if the familiar, fatherly voice had roused some far-off echo from childhood.

"What does he mean?" the nurse repeated impatiently in the morning at Sir Daniel's troubled inquiry. "How can he mean anything when he's out of sense? You should hear the rubbish some of them talk. My last patient was a bishop, and to hear him sing comic songs, and laugh, and ask me what odds I would take on the favourite was a caution. How he roared when I took him off in his convalescence! It helped him to get well."

A few days later Blanche Ingram received a telegraphic injunction, that she knew to be a command and was content to obey, to lunch with Isobel Mostyn at the "Princess," a smart, but quite respectable, club in Piccadilly, with balconies and bow windows looking upon the Park.

"How shabby the trees are," Isobel complained. "Why, then, do I come to town in August? you ask. Why, firstly, because Eugénie is a beast and exacts three fittings on for one frock, and secondly, because I have to go through a wedding, a launch, a bazaar, and a royal foundation-stone. Hats I can get from Bond Street by

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telegram. There is a clever little woman at Maude Raymond's who knows exactly what suits me, and hits off the sweetest things—given the description of the costume—never makes a mistake, a perfect genius for colour—by return of post. But frocks are a serious matter, and one cannot go in rags, even to country functions. Thirdly—never mind the thirdly——”

Blanche smiled on the radiantly attired being before her ; one quarter of Isobel's last month's rags would have clothed her sumptuously for a year. Yet she knew that she was not ill-dressed. But then, as Isobel said, the sole aim of Blanche's life was not to add personally to the adornment of the world.

“Does it never pall, Belle ?” she asked, meaning dress.

“What does not at times ? Is your perpetual college grind never weariness and vexation, Blanche ?”

“Never, but a perennial joy and refreshment.”

“Oh ! that I were a swot !” sighed Isobel. “Here's the menu, Blanche—choose. What wine ? Their Clos Vougeot isn't bad. But shun their hocks, darling, as you value your life. Do they ice your drinks in that blessed settlement ? Or must you share lukewarm beer out of pewter pots with your costers ? Now, what on earth *do* you do in that smutty settlement ? They say you all talk Greek with 'Arry and 'Arriet, but I don't believe it. And give them balls. What *can* 'Arriet look like in a low frock ?”

“'Arriet neither wears nor sees low frocks, Belle. She would blush to do either. We dance in high blouses, with flowers in our hair, when we can get any. 'Arry is quite charming at a dance. He narrowly watches the gentlemen and copies all they do. Instead of Greek we try to get them to talk English—which, by the way, few people ever do in these days, at least in England. As Mr. Bassett maintains, it will soon be a dead language.”

“Ah !” Isobel was deeply interested in a passing omnibus. “Our poor Greek faun ! The settlement

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appears to have nearly settled him, by all accounts. Isn't this bow window deliciously cool? and all to ourselves, so that we can chatter as we like."

"Between ourselves, dear Belle, I fear the settlement is responsible for that poor fellow's illness. And—it does seem waste to risk such a life in an adventure so—so forlornly hopeful. As if one should try to cut down forests with a sword."

"Drains, of course?"

"Drains and impure water must always be in it, they say. But nobody else is down, only Mr. Bassett. It seems as if these microbes can't hatch themselves comfortably without something else, some mental or physical strain, some vital depression or emotional crisis."

"Don't accuse our poor faun of a love-cross, for pity's sake," Isobel said, with an odd little laugh. "He's made of sterner stuff. Phyllis Thornton, his cousin, who lives with Sir Dan, hints at love-crossing. I was week-ending at Bassett Towers when the news came, don't you know, and you never saw such consternation. Airedale's only sentence the whole time was, 'If only Adrian were here!' Everything went wrong, according to Airedale, in consequence of his absence. *Can* people fall in love in settlements? Is 'Arriet so fascinating?" she added, with a sudden keen look into Blanche's soft and meditative eyes. The eyes drooped, and a faint blush came and went in the clear pale face.

"So we hope," she said. "We try to promote good love matches—but not among the settlers. No; I cannot allow Mr. Bassett's heart to be broken. He—he is not like everybody, Belle. I can't understand him. One way and another it happened that I saw a good deal of him just before his illness. You know that our settlement is the feminine complement of his. He interests me," she added, scrutinizing the menu card. "Airedale's intense feeling for him and poor George Lulworth's devotion, too, gave him a sort of romantic flavour before one

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knew him. He inspires a curious sort of pity, difficult to explain. He interests you, too, I think ? ”

“ Certainly. Jim’s idol, as you say. ”

“ Now, does he strike you as being happy, Belle ? ”

“ Why not ? People don’t weep in ball-rooms or pour their griefs into their partners’ bosoms. At least, not in the West End. ”

“ Not quite. And—I am sure he is no coward. And yet—to tell the truth, he was to have been recommended to leave the settlement. ”

“ Blanche ! What on earth—what do you mean ? ”

“ Simply that he was doing no good—least of all to himself. Cheerfulness is the soul of that kind of work. And every day made him sadder. He told me that he could not bear it, he could neither eat nor sleep for thinking of that great mass of incurable, inevitable suffering and want, for which he saw no remedy. It was evident that the life was being crushed out of him by *something*. One night there had been a dance, the greatest success possible. In the East End, Belle, we dance with all our hearts, and not merely with the tips of our toes. Nothing went wrong—not so much as a look askew. Lemonade and sandwiches and iced coffee by the ton cheered but not inebriated us, and the dust was not quite intolerable. Mr. Bassett handed these refreshments about and danced most of the dances, and was entitled, like the rest of us, to the serene slumbers of the consciously just. The hall was empty, and some of us were helping to put things straight—chairs and benches had been pushed aside for the dance—when in came poor young Lulworth—he really is a dear boy, Belle—looking half distraught, and, taking me aside, implored me to go to Mr. Bassett. ‘ I don’t know what to make of him, Miss Ingram,’ he said, ‘ he seems to be quite off his head ; he’s carrying on like a girl. ’ ”

“ Ah ! ” interrupted Isobel, who had been listening with an interest apparently divided between the recital and

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the two opposite streams of buses and cabs, "the fever, delirium, oh! poor fellow! Lulworth should have taken him home and fetched a doctor, young idiot!"

"Not delirium at all, Belle; but they say that typhoid often begins with great depression and bodily weariness. However, as Mr. Lulworth insisted on my having an influence on his friend—we have discussed social questions a good deal together, naturally——"

"Naturally," Isobel assented rather drily, "else what are university settlements for?"

"So I went. He was in the settlement garden—smut and smoke plot I should call it—all of a heap on a bench, his head fallen forwards on his arms on a table. It was raining and all dark, not very dark, but dark in the pale way of a full moony, cloudy night. Lulworth said he had been crying—just think—but he was quite still when we found him, horribly still and all wet with rain. 'I say, Bassie,' said Lulworth, 'here is Miss Ingram.' No answer or movement. 'Look up, old chap,' Lulworth said, giving him a little shake, 'she wants to speak to you. You can't keep her out in the rain.' Still no movement from the crouched figure. 'Mr. Bassett,' I said presently, 'you are not well. What can we do for you? What is it?' After a time I lifted his head and looked into a wax white face, with glassy, despairing eyes. 'Get a doctor,' I told the boy. 'No,' Mr. Bassett muttered heavily at last, 'I am not ill.' 'Then for pity's sake get up and go to bed,' I said; and he got up and apologized, looking, oh, so heart-sick. 'How can you bear this?' he asked. We were all three pretty damp by this time, Belle. I thought it lucky that neither my hair nor my complexion washes off. 'It is so hopeless,' he went on, 'the little we can do is trying to stop the waves with a hayfork. Savages? Why I saw a woman kicked nearly to death last night, with a crowd looking on and not stirring a finger. I saw two women fighting to-day, fighting like fiends, and men

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standing by, laughing and egging them on. And I danced to-night with the daughter of the woman who was kicked by the girl's father, and is lying unconscious in a hospital. And I saw and heard little children——' He grew more and more agitated till his voice broke in a sob. 'And after two thousand years,' he cried, 'two thousand years.' We took him each by a hand and led him out of the wet; by this time he was shivering violently—I suppose with fever—and, after a little scolding and soothing, I told the boy to make him have a hot bath—don't you remember how comforted St. Augustine was by a hot bath after his mother's death?—and go to bed. Next day he talked calmly and rationally, but looked wretched and worn out, and was obviously very ill; he apologized for the night before, and said that Lulworth was about as blundering as they make them. I advised him to go into the country and forget the East End till he was more like himself, but he said it was burnt into his brain till he could think of nothing else. 'And after two thousand years,' he repeated, 'our pitiful efforts to push back the sea with a hayfork.' I pointed out that the devil not being dead, we can't expect perfection, especially in the accumulated dregs of a vast civilization, and that with time and patience we can push all the seas of the world behind us with an oar, a paddle, or a screw. This philosophy appeared to afford him some faint consolation, which may have been only politeness, otherwise he continued as sad as the Sultan of Serendib. Now what does all this mean, Belle, a mental or a moral flaw?"

"Neither, simply typhoid. What loathsome aspic they give you here. And we might have had mayonnaise—of lobster."

"I am not sure of that," Blanche replied absently.

"But I am, it's on the card," Isobel said.

"He never has any money. Just fancy, he borrows shillings and half-crowns of people to pay cab-fares; he

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gives everything away, demoralizing everybody who comes near him."

"By the way, my third reason for coming to town is—Aunt Gussie's last scrape. She has pawned a tiara that doesn't really belong to her—a family jewel—and can't redeem it."

"My dear. What *can* be done?"

"That's the question. Airedale is distracted. We must get it back before my uncle knows, if we have to steal it. I thought of raising money on my rubies, but I should have to have them imitated first. Blue Diamond is my very own, Uncle Algernon's gift. He'll fetch not less than two hundred guineas."

"Sell Blue Diamond? Your only hunter? My dear?"

"I'd sell myself to get Aunt Gussie out of this. Why even Biddy grasps the horror of the thing, and we'd both hunt on foot the winter long—but we daren't. It must be kept dark, because if Uncle Somersby found it out the smash-up would be too awful to think of. My selling my poor darling Die would not give the thing away. 'One of Belle's whims,' they would say. Or they might think I had been plunging in frocks. We can smoke here after 2.30. Try a Pèra, a gold-tipped. This cigarette case is solid gold, covered with pearls and brilliants on one side, and—oh! how lucky! no crest or monogram. What will it fetch, *Blanche*? Shall I ask Spink? No one will notice its absence. If mother asks for it I can say I've put it away. Even she must be kept in the dark. *Blanche*, dear, how could we bear things without cigarettes?"

"How, indeed? We might be driven to philosophy—or even religion."

"Nobody can practise virtue or cultivate religion upon racked nerves. *Blanche*, dear, how is he to-day, do you know?"

Something seemed to fall away from Isobel with this

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question, and disclose her with a child's transparency and a child's anguish, that went to Blanche's heart.

"How should I not?" she replied, blowing a little ring of smoke into the sunshine and laying her cigarette on the balustrade edge, while her eyes sought the play of sunlight among the trees in the Park. "I called to inquire this morning, and who should come out but Marion Moore—you remember Canon Moore?—his daughter; she's a trained nurse and old friend of Belminster days—just off duty with a black eye four days old. 'As well as you can be with typhoid,' was the report. We walked a little way together, and she was saying what great influence little things have on the sick. 'And before all things I bless whoever sent some bits of myrtle and verbenā from Norton Bassett to my patient,' she said; 'of course no *man* would have dreamt of doing such a thing. It worked like magic; he's never been anything like so bad since. He watches the myrtle by the hour as if his salvation hung upon it.'"

The sound of a faint sob made Blanche start and turn, to see a shower of tears leaping down Isobel's dress; her face was screened by a paper she was using as a fan.

"I asked Marion," Blanche went on, "if it was etiquette for nurses to talk about cases. She said it was one of those strict rules that sensible people always break upon occasion. Here's the waiter, Belle; I'll settle."

Blanche always knew that she would probably have to pay the bill when bidden to a repast by Isobel, on account of the latter's habit of losing, forgetting, or emptying her purse; a habit that occasioned her neither remorse nor inconvenience, since, as she said, "If alone, you can always cab to somebody for the pence," which pence she always forgot to return, unless her sisters were the lenders, when they reimbursed themselves by the simple process of force, or by levying distraint on her goods.

On this occasion poor Lady Isobel omitted to make the customary reference to the ever-missing purse, which

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chanced to be lying with her gloves in full sight; nor did she murmur the usual thanks and promise of prompt repayment, so deeply was she absorbed in contemplation of the sunny tree-tops above which the bright wings of pigeons flashed across a blue sky. It was full fifty seconds before she turned a laughing face and dewy eyes to Blanche and kissed her warmly for good-bye.

"She loves him," Blanche thought, as she went east in an omnibus.

"He loves her," sighed Isobel, waiting on the steps for a hansom that was to take her to Bond Street.

CHAPTER VII

THE CITY BY THE NORTHERN SEA

The City by the Northern sea,
A haunted town it is to me.—A. LANG

IN the "little city, old and grey," called St. Andrews, there are to every creature still wearing the garb of mortality more ghosts than elementary arithmetic can reckon; but whether this superabundance of disembodied folk imparts greater charm or melancholy to the weed-grown streets, is hard to say. For some of the ghostly presences haunting the grim little town are eminently beautiful and fascinating, notably that of the fatal Helen of the North, for whom "many drew swords and died," and so many more lived and pined and plotted and sinned in her life-time, and ages after her death still love and mourn, and defend hotly, and censure steadily, and dispute over fiercely, dazzled even now by glamour of her wit and witchery of her beauty and pity of her many sorrows, and of the cruel fate that dogged her steps from her cradle to the scaffold, to which jealous malignity brought her comely and prematurely whitened head. To many women it is given to charm all that set eyes upon them, and even to inspire great poetry ages after they are dust; but only to Scottish Mary was given a charm so deathless and a glamour so far-reaching, as to stir the pulse of chivalrous devotion in hearts yet unborn centuries after her tragic death; so that men walk in her ruined palaces and trace her steps through ancient cities

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in this prosaic twentieth century, their breasts athrob with romantic passion for her. Singular destiny for a queen, whose rule in life was so shadowy and throne so insecure, to reign through the after ages by the power of unseen beauty and traditionary smiles.

"She was pitiless to Chastelard," Blanche said. They were leaving the spot in the Castle where the poet was put to death, to sit in sunlight on the ruined wall, at the base of which the waves sang that endless song so rarely hushed at St. Andrews. "She threw him to the wild beasts, as women are said to throw their children to the wolves, when the pack are upon them and the sledge horses spent."

"Not cruel, but just," Isobel maintained. "No woman could condone such an insult. Besides it was high treason. How did it feel to be Queen-Regent over those fierce and headstrong Scots? Like lion-taming? Did you see the glitter in that woman's eyes when she went into the lion cage at the Hippodrome? It was the very joy of life."

"She had a cruel mouth, Belle. The lions cringed; the poor splendid creatures! She used hot irons, they said. And Mary used her charm, which burnt deeper than irons."

"Could she help her charm? That was the tragedy of her life. Still—she lived. What a life, Blanche! Think of it! the wit, and the joyance, and the splendour, and the terror—above all, the feeling of power. Driven to bay by those hard Puritans, she knew that she only had to smile on one and the tiger was chained to her service for life. She played at chess with Death and Dishonour, and her pieces were living men, her board the world."

"And lost?"

"Not tamely, and not till she had played the game through. I should like to have been Mary, Blanche. She must have been alive to her very finger-tips."

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"In Lochleven? The Queen was castled pretty early in the game. Rather like stalemate, wasn't it?"

"Who would you rather have been, Blanche, in all the centuries? Don't say Lady Jane Grey, or one of those terrible Roman matrons—the British matron is descended from them, only many shades grimmer."

"Please may I be Joan of Arc?"

"What, and be burnt alive?"

"To do anything really worth doing you must be burnt alive one way or another."

The afternoon was warm for September. Beyond the bay, which spread blue and bright before them, purple hills lifted wooded shoulders against a pure sunlit sky over which gulls, steeped in sunshine till they seemed incandescent, sailed slowly as if sleeping on their great curved pinions.

"Is virtue so expensive? Then why did I give up Homburg to dance attendance on my father's golf in the coldest and grimmest corner of the earth?"

They sat facing each other in a traceried window arch, their profiles distinct on blue sky, Isobel blooming with deepest wild-rose tints, Blanche's clear-cut features cream white, both perfectly idle and perfectly happy, watching a swimmer for whom they were waiting swim out to sea from the ladies' bathing-place.

"Here you are at last," said a joyous voice behind them, "and you said you'd be on the ladies' links——"

"At five o'clock, Mr. Bassett, not a moment before," Isobel replied, turning in her niche. "Have you been round already? My father thinks it unpardonably flippant to be so quick. It's not paying proper respect to the Royal and Ancient."

"I left him in hell bunker, Lady Isobel. His caddie looked as if he was hearing language."

To judge from their smiling looks, these trivialities might have been spherulic music; so perhaps virtue is occasionally its own reward even on this planet.

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The cousins slipped from their niche on the arrival of Lady Biddy, the swimmer, fresh like Aphrodite from the waves—but with more millinery on—and walked half a mile along a turf-edged road to Lord Kilmeny's house, where they found a dozen young people chattering over the teacups in a bow-windowed room, looking on the blue dazzle of the sea and the little hill named from the poor old women arraigned there as witches in the brave days of old.

Sir Daniel, just returned from a political speechifying in Fife and Forfar, heard the gay laughter and young voices ring out over the road as he drove to the great modern hotel by the links. The sound warmed his heart; he stopped the fly, got out and went round to the tea party, where he sat very contentedly in a corner, munching scones and listening to the follies which are the wisdom of youth. It was still a perpetual feast to him to see Adrian well again after the scare of his recent illness, which had left him, not pale and exhausted, but as if renewed by Medea's magic herbs. The sharp salt air of the North Sea had made him brown and hardy looking, while his golf was already beginning to be talked about.

They were talking of golf over the teacups, and they would talk it at dinner, Sir Daniel knew; little but golf ever seems to be talked about in this city of ruins and sport, phantoms and athletes—at least when the red gowns are absent—and what better theme, he often asked, could be wished?

Adrian agreed that it was a fine game to bring up relaxed muscles and preserve elderly gentlemen from dyspepsia and overmuch flesh, a gentle, dawdling, comfortable way of getting through the morning out of doors, without effort. But Lulworth, faithful even to the neglect of his own partridge-shooting to the royal game, advised him not to air these opinions at the clubhouse, or in the hearing of the truly great upon the links. "The very caddies would do you to death without mercy," he

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said. "Wait till Cup Day and take off your hat to the game."

Sir Daniel and Lady Biddy played Adrian and Isobel that afternoon, and Sir Daniel and Lady Biddy were easily ahead.

"What has come to that scamp of mine?" he asked Lady Biddy, surprised at his own success; and she replied, "Spooning," a term too emphatic for the conversation that passed in the intervals between their strokes and their admiration of hills darkening on the glowing sky, and breakers rolling up from a sapphire plain to tumble their snowy crests into long curves of rosy gold.

The breakers were so fascinating that, when the vanquished couple had done their round, they crossed the low sandhills piled by the sea in the deep curve of the bay, and stood on the sands below, their figures silhouetted upon the moving waste of waves, changing in the last sunrays into every tint of blue, green, and purple with crimson and rose and amber surf-fringes.

When Sir Daniel joined this pair he thought he saw an unexpected gravity upon the faces turned to him in the sunset light, and was certain that Isobel's thoughts were away from what she said to him.

And when Lady Biddy's sudden descent from the dunes to say that they would be late for dinner turned them into the homeward stream flowing off the links, and he observed Adrian's prompt breaking off to join Blanche and Lulworth on the green, Sir Daniel wished he had not blundered into their *tête-à-tête* on the sands. "Perhaps, after all, it's Biddy," he thought, when they went back in a glowing afterlight like the unfolding of a vast rose above the purple hills, and then a sudden cold fear took him that it might be Blanche.

"Since you ask me," Lulworth told him over the coffee after dinner, Adrian dining out that evening, "I think it is on the cards. Adrian thinks everything of her; she has more influence on him than anybody."

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"And is—nobody," was the involuntary sigh.

"Oh! she's very well connected; the Ingrams are a good old stock, they are the right Ingrams," Lulworth said in surprise. "The Archdeacon married a Coverdale, a sister of Lady Kilmeny and Lady Somersby; they were known as the three handsome Coverdales, the Three Graces."

"But what is an archdeacon?" asked Sir Daniel, unconscious of propounding a question that no one has as yet been able to answer satisfactorily.

"Well, he's a sort of cathedral don, isn't he? Anyhow, Miss Ingram is a ripping good sort, and as clever as they make them."

"The deuce she is," thought Sir Daniel, wishing that he had stood more firmly against those few days Adrian spent at Belminster on his way to Scotland.

In the early twenties time counts for much, and it already seemed ages since Bassett's experiences in the university settlement had been brought to a close by fever. Those experiences were a fire baptism he could never forget; they were branded into the living flesh of his soul. Perhaps he had not realized or even thought, until that moonlit night in his college attic when Grimbsy delivered his tirade against a growing plutocracy, that he was the son of a very rich man, and that the luxury in which he was bred was not the lot of the majority even of those with whom he seemed on an equality. That wealth counts for so little at Eton is among the healthiest attributes of all great English schools; nor is the glory that clings to an Eton head greater to the boy mind than the aureole surrounding a Winchester or a Westminster brow.

That Eton happened to be the special school of aristocracy was unknown, or, if known, unnoticed, by Adrian, who was as ready as any to fight for the superiority of the school's cricket, boating, slang, and even scholarship. That he had been very happy there he knew; happier than

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many, happier than "that poor little chap, Lulworth," for instance. Flashes of surprise, notably during holiday visits to Lulworth's people, an old family sitting from time immemorial under ancestral oaks and elms, and dwindling under the modern agricultural pinch, and to Airedale's more stately homes, where the pinch of poverty came from more preventable causes, had shown him, among other things, the little honour that comes from riches alone. Poverty relative he had seen, but even that in an idyllic garb, chiefly at his grandfather's country rectory, where he remembered delightful childish days of running in and out of farms and cottages. His mother's numerous charities suggested the existence of a vague entity called the poor, who are always to be with us, while Sir Daniel's gorgeous munificence disclosed a certain picturesque unevenness in the general distribution of the world's wealth; but at Norton Bassett the so-called poor, recipients of Christmas beef and blankets, were really rich; they lived in ugly comfortable dwellings in a model village, to Adrian's mind destitute of every charm and pervaded by a curious unreality at variance with the smug complacency of its stolid brick boxes. So when, at the bidding of some deep impulse roused by a chance word and fostered by opportunity, he went with two or three friends and followed by the ever-faithful Lulworth, to the settlement planted by university men in the East End, the sudden roar of that vast, weltering waste of abject and incurable poverty crashing so thunderously upon his startled ears, deafened and stunned him. Little sorrow and no pain had touched the gladness of a healthy boyhood and vigorous adolescence, which, but for the tender and uplifting sorrow for a mother's death and grief for a brother's fine and enviable ending, had been one continuous burst of enjoyment. Then, from dingy street and dreary slum, he heard a great and exceeding bitter cry of suffering and degradation; then want and privation looked from the hollow eyes of anæmic children, hunger and hardship

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were written on the pallid faces and stunted figures of hard-eyed women and brutal, low-browed men; then sensuality paraded unveiled and shameless in his sight; little shrewd children without youth looked unappalled upon drunkenness and obscenity, and ugly jests and nameless profanity came from the lips of young women and young children.

To this glad and golden youth the bitterest drop of all was the absence of enjoyment. To him the gladness with which the poor people entered into the brief pleasure of some entertainment was pathetic, still more their comments: "A reg'lar beano, like this, makes up for a lot"—a lot sometimes meaning a workless winter's privation and the consequent death of child or wife. Bread and circuses, given those, elementary man is content—miserably, sordidly content; but after all, circuses are more necessary than bread. Yet the golden youth observed a still greater want even than the absence of enjoyment, in the absence of religion. The heathen in his blindness at least bows down to wood and stone, but these, in the mass, that is, bowed down to nothing. "Have you ever heard of God, lad?" "Yuss." "Who is he?" "Him as sends 'bokes to hell." Without some slight religious knowledge you cannot even blaspheme.

Wild impulses and crude thoughts followed the shock of this first contact with the world's misery; impulses to self-immolation, thoughts of property as theft, poverty as the root of ignorance, squalor, and vice, civilization as built upon slavery and suffering, Christianity as a dream, possible even as a dream only to the well fed and well clad. Though Christ was a poor man and worked with his hands for bread, he was not poor like these. If his toil was strenuous, his bread was sufficient; but these haggard men and hollow-eyed women worked with incessant toil for starvation pay. Besides, neither Christ nor the twelve disciples were unskilled workers—those

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poor bond-slaves of industrialism ever at hand-grips with starvation—each had his own handicraft. Whence comes the unskilled worker? Adrian wondered. Not alone from factory and trading work. Why is the proletariat taught by the State to read and write—which is no education, and not instructed in crafts that ensure bread—which are an education in themselves? Surely those three miserable, ineffectual r's are the stone given for bread. But the unskilled worker is there, and the sweater is there, and the factory and the spirit of gain are there—and these are among the horrors of that giant town which is a nation in itself and also the sink for an empire's failures and offscourings.

These thoughts and overwork in foul air and depressing surroundings drove him half mad. He could not eat for thinking of those without bread, he could not sleep because so many were homeless, could enjoy nothing because of the tyrannous cruelty ravaging the lives of helpless children and hopeless women, whose screams and profanities, heard from closed rooms with horrible suggestions of brutal blows, rang through his fitful slumbers.

"Go away, Mr. Bassett," Blanche said one day, after some discussion of these things, "go into pure air, go yachting, pleasuring, idling, anything, else you will go mad."

"Am I such poor stuff?" was the reply. "Then if I'm too weak for the thought of what these suffer, let me go mad." Yet, as usual, when there was time or opportunity for such discussions, her way of looking at these things, so far as they could be discussed with a woman, calmed him with some faint ray of hope or suggestion of wise ignorance and transient forgetfulness of a pain too great to be borne without some such narcotic.

With returning health came the determination, the natural buoyant instinct of self-healing, to forget and be glad for a time, and there is no gladness like the gladness of returning health to the young. All is fresh and vivid

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with the eternal vitality that renews the earth each spring; every star shines with new brilliance, every leaf on every tree is wrapt in Eden glory; the summer sea leaps fresh as on the first day from the Creator's hand, shaking white foam crests in the joy of exuberant life, vigorous and vivifying, murmuring peacefully, or shouting deep pæans of unutterable, irrepressible joy. Nothing is without charm in this great renewal. It is like infancy with the consciousness of manhood.

The grey grim streets of the city of ruins, swept by iron blasts from the roaring North Sea, or shrouded in driving rains and chilly mists of early September, were strangely fascinating to a southern eye; the low white cot with picturesque outside stairs; the inn-yard in the middle of the broad empty street, with its haystack and primitive surroundings in full publicity; the jollity of bare-foot urchins and sturdy little lasses munching perpetual cakes, the ruddy-faced women with shawled heads, knitting and chatting on doorsteps and stools in the open; the bell and the horn announcing wares ambulant in the cobbled quiet street; the Fife accent and Scottish words, with the shadow of stern and storm-beaten towers over all; and that wildly broken and still beauteous cathedral front closing the vista of every street—all had ineffable charm; while the glory of the fierce exultant sea, so seldom quiet in summer song, over the long roaring ridges of which few things but the sea-birds ever passed, the grandeur of the long range of hills above it, and the romantic gloom of all those shattered and historic towers and walls were pure ecstasy. Then the live salt breath of the sea-locked links, whence mountain and towered town and corn-crowned cliff and country running up into the very streets of the city were visible, was sheer delight.

But even the joyance of new birth after sickness was not wholly responsible for the charm and gladness that ever after made the city by the Northern sea a haunted town to Bassett. Was it the glamour that lies on every

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spot over which Mary Stuart cast the fascination of her lovely glance, or was it the fitness of that tongue of land by Eden river for golf, or the discovery that the Lowland Scot is a more genial creature than tradition and report affirm, or the bright exhilaration of a climate composed largely of stinging winds and penetrating mists, or—the fact that Lord Kilmeny happened to have brought a retinue, consisting of a son, two daughters, and a niece, to the bow-windowed house on the Scores? In any case, when the grand gold medal day came at the end of September, sunny and warm as if fetched up out of the heart of June, and the gun announced the beginning of the great match in the morning, it occurred to an undergraduate, standing in the gay company by the club-house to see the first drive, that life was well worth living.

“These links aren’t half bad, George,” he said to the faithful Lulworth, in the fullness of his heart.

“Not half. But how many days will this thing take by the time every man on the list has teed off?” George asked.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOLD MEDAL DAY

“ONE great favour we have to ask,” Lady Biddy said to Adrian, when it came to Lord Kilmeny’s turn at the first hole; “don’t watch my father. He doesn’t much mind a gallery, which he is sure to have, as long as none of the family are in it.”

Adrian crimsoned with pleasure; but Isobel shot a dark look at her sister. “Family?” she cried. “What nonsense, Biddy, it’s friends that make him nervous; strangers don’t put him out.”

“Lots of people feel like that,” Adrian said.

“He’s wearing my white heather,” cried Blanche, putting down her glasses; “and—hurrah! he’s got the hole.”

“But what will you get if he catches you looking at him?” Biddy asked. “Let’s go home to luncheon now he’s safely off.”

All day long in the warm sunlight the links were dotted over with golfers and moving groups dogging the steps of the great, and watching their play as if empires depended upon it. All round the club-house, and swarming far over the green, was a many-coloured crowd in summer dress, sitting, standing, or moving from group to group; fair-faced women, bronzed men, anxious and responsible caddies—these mostly of mahogany or walnut hue, young and old, with here and there a beautiful boy-face, and here and there a grizzled, weather-beaten veteran, but all bearing their clubs as if they were lictors carrying bundles of fasces with a more than Roman, a Scotch, gravity upon

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their faces and twinkles of enjoyment in their shrewd grey eyes.

But before the gold medal was won, the mountains had melted into soft purple dreams upon a liquid sky of lemon, chrysolite, and topaz, and long shafts of rose-tinged light shot over the dense crowd ranged, breathless, hushed, and intent, round the immortal being in act to make the last drive into the last hole, and, as every onlooker supposed, win the Gold Medal of William IV.

The hand of many a gallant photographer quivered in the anguish of uncovering his camera at the right moment, and the breast of many heaved with fury as the head or shoulder of some heedless spectator wantonly invaded his foreground. The pulses of the intent crowd throbbed with often baffled expectation, as the eye of the great golfer measured the ground between the ball and the hole again and again, and he grasped his instrument with fierce and fell energy in both hands, first one way, then another, now gently and deftly patting the turf immediately behind the ball, now, with glaring eye and bristling moustache, whirling the iron-shod club with an acrobatic twist of his whole body above his head and far behind him, with a force and determination so terrible as to strike cold fear into the hearts of the uninitiated bystanders, hitherto accustomed to hold such actions characteristic of cannibal islanders, ogres, and battle-axe men in armour; then, as if in face of a duty beyond the power of mere humanity, sadly and slowly relaxing from this furious menace to a tamer and more peaceable attitude, till, from the rank of boomerang, battle-axe, or two-handed sword, the driving-iron sank to the level of a mere pacific umbrella, spade, or walking-stick, and the turf behind the ball was again gently, almost caressingly, patted by it. Then at last, in pity to bright eyes on the point of being suffused with tears of repressed emotion and manly breasts ready to burst with it, the great golfer suddenly and without the slightest warning, with a quick and complicated pirouette

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that threw him upon his other leg, whirled his club so fiercely and swiftly round that he seemed to smite his own shoulder with it, and in the rebound caught the ball clean in the centre with a quick crack, that sent it singing in a fine arch to the long-envisaged hole. The crowd breathed; the last sunray vanished; and the great golfer sighed from the depths of a vast, immeasurable beatitude. He had not lived in vain.

"Who has it?" cried Lady Biddy, as the crowd fell to pieces in garrulous groups, and eager partisans, with sticks, sunshades, or anything handy, and vociferous caddies, with niblick, brassey, and putting-iron, illustrated their favourite golfer's style with actions so energetic as to imperil the public safety. "Who has it?" was echoed on all hands, while the great one, calm but quietly elate, walked slowly, and without apparent consciousness of his superiority to the general human race, through a lane of silent and respectful homage to the club-house, whence Adrian, Lulworth, and Lismore, son of Kilmeny, came running with the great man's name on their lips and a narrow shave of cannoning against him, and also with the tidings that among the many disappointed of the medal, who had done valiantly on that great and glorious day, Lord Kilmeny had borne himself most gallantly and covered himself with renown; so that all that party went home to dinner in great gladness of heart, and Lady Biddy hastened to her bower, there to express her feelings by turning seven wheels in honour of her sire's achievements; Isobel, helped by Mr. Bassett, wrote a sonnet on the occasion; and Lismore demanded choice wine in commemoration of the event.

How ruddy were the faces at the ball that night—faces, that is to say, unskilfully powdered—even Blanche Ingram had a slight sun-flush. Lady Biddy, who scorned making up, was frankly red and exceedingly handsome in a vivid and commanding way; but Isobel's delicate tint was still only the deepest wild rose. As for the frocks, none but

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those versed in the mysteries of chiffon lore could paint their splendour or analyse their charm. But it was the general opinion that Lady Isobel's gown was especially fascinating ; it looked as if it was made of moon-lit foam still blushing with sunset rose. Out of this sea-foam rose a face in which was all the beauty, charm, and gladness that ever was or will be in the whole world—at least, so Bassett thought. Other ladies present were fair, but with the remote, impersonal fairness of the long dead beside this fresh and breathing beauty. The grace and spontaneity of her dancing made her like an embodied poem, he thought, watching her with spell-bound gaze, and sometimes catching with a deep heart-throb the sapphire flash of laughing eyes, when the whole bright and coloured whirl of dancers, the glimmer of white shoulders, sparkle of bright eyes and jewels, glow of young faces, waving of tartans, flash of jewelled weapons, and grace of bare bronzed limbs became glorious, enchanted, a scene of fairy glamour.

"I say, Bass," Lulworth's voice broke through the languorous swell of music and hum of voices and light laughter, "every fellow in the room that isn't gone upon Lady Belle is head-over-ears with Lady Biddy ; you can't get within yards of either."

"Well, young 'un, which are you for ? "

"Neither, I go solid for Miss Ingram. Isn't she ripping in white ? Over there with that Scotch chap."

Adrian looked ; Blanche smiled ; her gallant Highlander drew her into the dance, his tartan floating round her shining draperies.

"Did you ever see a better goer or more thoroughbred one ? "

"It isn't her looks, Geordie ; it's her mind and pleasant ways. What popinjays these figged-out Scotch fellows look ! Some of them would be the better of a judicious kicking, or I'm much mistaken," he added suddenly.

The music's close sent the couples apart, and he slipped

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to the other side of the room, whence Isobel was turning into a corridor with her Highland partner. Adrian shadowed them, often blocked by the crowd, with many turns and dodgings, until the first notes of the next dance began. Then at last, by a rapid and rather hazardous cross-cut, he came face to face with Lady Isobel in act to say, "My dance, I think," when the words were taken out of his mouth by another kilted Scotchman, whose jewelled shoulder pressed and almost shoved him aside.

"Mine on the contrary," said Adrian, offering vigorous passive resistance to the jewelled shoulder.

"Certainly my dance," insisted the Scot, cold anger in his grey eyes, "number eight, Lady Isobel," with impressive finality.

"Number eight without doubt is my dance," Adrian insisted, white with fury.

"Surely," Isobel smiled, looking at her card, then, very sweetly, at Adrian, "surely some mistake, Mr. Bassett."

Then the Highlander, with flaming eyes and bristling moustache, bore her off in triumph, leaving the Saxon pretender, petrified with indignation and amazement, to drink the bitter draught of the slighted. The glamour faded, the gay assembly was a stupid noisy crowd, the women looked older and the men heavier. She was a flirt. All women were flirts. Life was a sordid tragedy-comedy of painted faces and grinning masks.

"Who the deuce is that red-headed, raw-boned Scotch beast?" he asked Blanche a few minutes later, though he knew him quite well by name as a distinguished golfer.

"Oh, quite one of the clean beasts that went by twos into the Ark. Surely you must know the Master of Balmorran? he is dancing with Isobel Mostyn. Rather a fine-looking man."

"Oh! a fine model for Judas."

"The fiery hair is the Highland blood. Biddy has a touch—they are cousins—Scotch, not German."

"Lady Biddy shall not be insulted. Her hair is Irish

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red-gold. Scotch carrot is quite another colour. What can that girl not dance ? ”

“ Nothing—from an Irish jig to a Scotch reel. It is a sight to see her do the sword dance with bare feet and bare claymores. But her dancing is not as graceful as Belle’s.”

The disputed dance ended and the wild romp of a barn dance, so congenial to Lady Biddy, began. Adrian and Blanche turned in different directions, but with one impulse and the same sensation of eating sour apples, from the spectacle of her ladyship’s prowess, and the former soon found himself alone in a room with an open window. There he leant on the sash and looked out upon the dark, surf-ridged sea glimmering with lights along the Forfar coast, with the Bass Rock light shining where sea met sky. There it was possible to sulk in silence and comfort.

“ Oh, I grant that the boy is good to look at,” he heard presently from a male voice passing behind him in the stream. “ But such an awful prig.”

“ Of all the senseless libels,” retorted a fluty voice that made his heart leap ; “ because he happens to be superior to every man of his age here, must he be a prig ? ”

“ Naturally ; superiority is the Oxford note. The newly rich always catch local notes badly.”

The voice died in the crowd ; Adrian was gladdened by the silver of a newly-risen moon touching the dim hill tops and slowly sloping down their flanks. The world was not so bad, after all. The sulk had softened to a reverie, though the wound still rankled, when a slight but imperative touch on his arm made him turn to meet Isobel’s smile of conscious power subdued by deprecation.

“ Don’t be too furious,” she pleaded ; “ who is not sometimes in need of forgiveness ? ”

“ One seems to have heard that observation of yours before,” was the stiff reply.

“ Of course I was horrid.” She laid her finger-tips lightly upon his arm, so that he was obliged to turn and

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walk with her. "I was in a fearful fix and had to—disoblige—one cavalier."

"Why so?" he condescended to ask.

"Because it was I who muffed the thing. He gave me his card to put down any vacant dance I might have. I meant to give him nine, but unluckily pencilled eight instead."

"I am greatly honoured by your consideration."

"Why not? We presume upon the generosity of great dogs, but take care not to put up the backs of little, yapping curs."

"So the big dogs get the kicks and the curs the half-pence. Prose justice, very poor prose."

"It doesn't do to upset Red Balmorran—did you ever see fierier hair?—apart from family reasons. We always seem to have family reasons for something, unluckily. That is to say, there has been not quite a scrimmage, but relations are strained, and we are under orders to propitiate Evan Roy."

"No matter how you trample on the harmless Saxon?"

"Besides his dirk was handy and a sharp knife in his hose, while you—had nothing," in tragic voice.

"Oh, yes, I had. A good two-bladed penknife is always in my pocket. Well, it would have been a pity to redden this superbly lovely frock."

"Do you really like my frock?" with a smile of pleasure. "Biddy said it made her hate me, and that's a good deal for Biddy to say; she always likes her own things best. She said Elise did it to spite her for not paying the last few snipes."

Glamour once more settled over the gay whirl of dancers and promenaders; glamour lay upon the mountains and sea outside; glamour streamed from the soft sapphire of smiling eyes and was in every trivial word the bright lips spoke. The barn dance romped too quickly by and the lady was borne off, this time by a grim, black-coated Saxon, while the deserted knight contentedly did his

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devoir to various meaner beauties of the night. The hours flew; the programme was exhausted; also the musicians and most of the guests. But some untiring spirits insisted on extra dances, and the night was waning and the dancing-hall empty, when young Lord Lismore, half tipsy, less with wine than Irish fun and frolic, refused to go home or go to bed or allow anybody else in the Mostyn household to do anything of the kind, and said what a heavenly thing it would be to climb St. Rule's Tower before the moonlight faded and the sun rose.

So along by the shimmering, surging sea, some eight or ten youths and maidens passed in the pale cool night, chaperoned unasked by the stout Sir Daniel, on whose iron frame neither night nor day, strenuous toil nor strenuous pleasure, seemed to make the slightest impression. Past silent, blank-windowed houses where good people slept peacefully; under rustling trees, fast losing their salt-withered leaves; under the shadow of towers brooding silently upon grim secrets centuries old; now in the moonlight, now in the shadow, the gay company went, the ball dresses hidden under long coats, the voices waking weird, mocking echoes in ruin and rock and burdened by the sea's unceasing roll, till they reached the magnificent west front, now steeped in silver quiet, of the cathedral that Scotch Protestantism has battered into ruin and then made into a place of many skulls. There they roused the astonished, vainly protesting custodian, of whom Lismore made short work with Irish blarney and English gold. Into the ruined nave lost in black shadow the revellers passed, along green aisles mounded by graves where living worshippers should have knelt; a weird company in incongruous attire, looking unreal in the dreamy light that here and there drew a sparkle from a half-hidden jewel, and gave unearthly lustre to bright eyes and phantom pallor to flushed, weary faces. Lady Biddy's auburn coronal shone fairy gold with a jewel flash here and there; Blanche's dark crest was wreathed with pearl and partly

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covered by a white hood ; a lithe, kilted Highlander stalked at her side and crossed himself with sudden recollection before the holy symbols. All the laughing voices fell to hushed undertones—even Biddy's and Lismore's—under the spell of that ruined, unearthly beauty of carven stone and fretted moulding and exquisite tracery. Clear in the silver light the perfect beginning of each beautiful clustered column, long ago broken off and destroyed, was seen beneath the traceried window. The great east wall still standing, turreted and solitary, mutilated but roof-high and lovely in the pathos of evil fate, was traced on the solemn sky ; and embedded in the wall, beneath where the high altar had been, the stones of expiation, carven monoliths from the ancient Culdee Church, were plainly visible in ironic comment upon human judgment. By the Haunted Tower they paused a moment, and by the turret light, that, like the ancient creed, no longer throws any kind and warning glow upon the devouring wastes and sunken rocks, thence between innumerable graves to the ancient and mysterious church of St. Rule, the remains of which, clear-cut as if hewn but yesterday, look upon the ruin of the younger cathedral.

Some courage to plunge into the empty darkness was necessary here ; but a lantern brought reassurance ; the ascent was accomplished, and youth and mirth embodied emerged, laughing and breathless, upon the summit of the solid, four-square tower that has weathered the blasts of time and storm and fanatic fury, and is older than any building it soars above ; and all the sleeping city, with its streets, and walls, and towers, and all the surging sea, with the long line of the Forfar coast, town-dotted and backed by a double hill-range ; and all the dim inland corn-country south ; and Kinkell Braes bounding the sea east till it merged in seeming infinity, lay outspread before them in fading moonlight and thinning shadow. There in the eastern curve the harbour lights sparkled with lessening lustre ; west of north the rocky ridge that bears

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the battered castle ran into angrily chafing surges; some fishing cobs and smacks rocked in the harbour towards which the humbler streets sloped. All the girdling foam of the gulf-like bay was tinged with pink, the moon herself was faintly pink, the broad pallor of the eastern sky began to glow with deep and ever deeper scarlet, the hill-summits emerged flushing from the darkness, a rosy cloud behind the Sidlaws was the snow-tipped peak of far Schehallion; above the solemn organ boom of the sea rose the robin's warble and the sea-mew's cry. Now the shadows were at cross purposes between sun-rising and moon-setting, dim shapes seemed to steal through the cathedral aisles and flit among the cloisters and along the Abbey wall, and in and out of the vague masses of its bastions, where bats fluttered in ivy hangings and an owl hooted eerily. It was like a dream-world slowly emerging from shadows, pink-flushed with the hopes of youth; vague masses resolved themselves into unexpected shapes; beauty grew silently from the heart of darkness; the earth was being visibly made afresh; the air was so pure in its newness that it gave a rare and vital quality to every faintest ray of wakening light; the very stones of the grim grey ruins seemed to thrill with returning life.

Adrian and Blanche, who had been silent companions all the way, stood at the east angle of the tower, watching broad scarlet bars form across the lucid pink of the sky, beneath which a trembling, many-ridged sea caught and broke their red radiance into mauve and purple, and rose and green, with hints of turquoise, sapphire, and chrysolite; the Highlander grew lyrical upon the ruin and overthrow of the old faith and its shattered symbol; and Sir Daniel rapidly calculated the lowest cost of restoring the cathedral, after reluctantly abandoning the idea of "developing" St. Andrews by building a residential hotel on the ruins, on account of the graves. Of the rest, some shivered in the keen morning air and some dreamed

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pleasantly of breakfast. Sir Daniel remembered that he had to catch an early train south, and Biddy that she was due at a match at North Berwick that day; and before the sun had leapt up from the sea all but Blanche and Adrian had plunged down through the darkness and out upon the road beyond the Abbey wall.

"She should have come; the thing is so rare, so superb," Adrian said, turning to follow them. But Blanche, wrapt in a delicious dream, had not observed the silence and gravity that had fallen upon him, when they reached the bow-windowed house on the way to the ruins, and Isobel suddenly said good night and was gliding into the house.

"You are not going in?" he remonstrated, following her.

"I must. I promised to be at the North Berwick match. Good night, or, rather, good morning."

The door opened, the darkness engulfed her, and all the magic and mystery faded out of the moonlit night. Bassett knew that the Master of Balmorran was to play in the match.

"Who should have come?" asked Blanche, lingering to see the hills growing warm and distinct in the warm light, which had a deeper glow now and began to burn with golden clarity. "Isobel? But she promised Evan Machulish to go to North Berwick. She is not made of cast iron, like Biddy."

"I suppose," said Adrian, handing her down the dark steep stair, "that that red-headed Scotch beast would be a good match."

"Poor Balmorran! He's a very good fellow, after all. Yes, he would be a fair match. But—you don't mean for Isobel? I should hope our pretty bright Isobel would look higher than that. Why she might pick and choose anywhere."

With apologies for this implied cheapening of Lady Isobel, he walked in pensive silence between the graves, till they emerged upon Kirk Hill, between the Abbey

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walls and the sea that lay smiling in the beauty of the dawn.

"You are not tired? Blanche, don't go home yet," he besought.

She coloured in the dawn-blush; he had never before called her by her name, and she was not angry. The warm radiance touched the ground plan of the ancient Culdee Church, perfect, but walled only by a few feet of daily trodden and diminishing masonry. The scarlet beams barred an azure sky, clear green, and then molten gold on the horizon; the Sidlaw Hills were like jewels above their wooded slopes and gleaming towns; higher up, Scheghallion was a flame upon a salmon-pink sky; even the grey and savagely battered castle glowed richly on its rocky spur above a tumbling sea of every hue.

"You are not cold?" he added, with the tenderness some men's voices so easily take. They were on the bench close to the gun on the site of the Culdee Church; Blanche drew her furred collar closer and more picturesquely round her face, refusing the coat offered.

"No; but Lismore must be frozen." She pointed below to a lithe, pink figure, wrestling with the rollers. Poor Lady Biddy, who could do things in the sea to inspire fishes with vain emulation, was watching it with envious eyes. "There's another."

"That's Malcolm Grahame," sighed Lady Biddy, passing by. "He went down with Dermot; Laura and I are making for the ladies' baths for just one dip. Wait for us, won't you?"

The probable untimely demise or severe illness of these rash beings, the date of the Celtic Church, the names of the vanishing lights at sea and the comparative merits of autumn and spring having been passed in review, Bassett spoke of last June and the revels that first brought them acquainted.

"Not quite four months," he said, "but a whole new life. Yet you were there unknown to me all the time."

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"But not Isobel. She only came for the week. I wanted to tempt her to join us. No use."

"I seem to have known you always. Things have thrown us into such intimacy, especially in the settlement, since that memorable first afternoon; memorable to me, I mean, not you. It was bright summer—hay was about—I had drowsed off over Dante's dream and woke to see the two ladies of the poem gathering flowers in the enamelled meadow by the mystic stream, Leah and Rachel. I was still in the poem till you spoke."

"And plunged you back into prose?"

"Then the *Vita Nuova* began," he said dreamily, watching long crystalline rollers break into surf on the rocks where sea-gulls and kittiwakes hovered and clustered innumerable, while Blanche's pulse quickened and her soft, deep eyes dilated with something that was almost terror. "Dante knew, as no man since—he knew that new life, and I sometimes think, Blanche, that you understand it too."

Her face went whiter in the rosy light and her heart stood still.

"That gives me courage to speak."

"Adrian!" The word was half a cry and wholly the expression of her deepest heart; it meant more than she knew, and startled her by its pathos, as if some one else had uttered it. Perhaps he did not even hear it in his preoccupation, it certainly held no surprise for him.

"You at least will not think me a conceited ass," he went on, "for speaking of losing myself and finding myself in one golden, glorious moment that made me—a man. One look, only one—as with Dante—that divine boy, who put on manhood at nine and remained a child his life long. I cannot dare to hope—but while I live, I shall—love." The word came glowing and quivering from the warmest depth of a deep heart, fresh and stainless. Then the mellow roar of breakers and crash of waves upon jutting rocks, and the cry of clouds of

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snowy sea-birds filled an exquisite silence, through which a woman's heart-throbs seemed audible to her.

"But why not—hope?" she faltered at last.

He turned suddenly, joyously. "Oh, if you think I may," he cried.

"I am sure you may," she replied in a calm, even voice.

"Why not?"

"Oh, you give me life," he cried, his dark eyes dilating.

"If I could but carry such a hope about with me for a few years, before I can have any right to speak."

"Any right?" she echoed, startled and perplexed; "surely the feeling gives the right. Besides—you *have* spoken," with a gentle smile.

"But only to you, dear Blanche. You see, though of age, I am still practically a minor, in tutelage—a student, an undergraduate. Till a man has done something to justify his existence and at least chosen a calling, he has no right to ask a woman to share it, to bias her in her choice and keep off better men."

"Not if it would make her *happy*? Does she love a calling or—a man, Adrian?"

"She has to be won before she can love at all, and she is so young and so far above me in every way, it would be mean to take advantage of her youth and ignorance, it would scarcely be honourable. My father was a starving street boy, hers is a peer."

A sharp pain went through her with an electric shock. "Do I understand?" she asked, with a quiver in her voice. "Who—of whom—are you speaking?"

"Why, of *her*—of *Isobel*," he said, dwelling upon the name with a reverent passion that made it a deep and solemn symphony.

For a moment sky and sea spun round and the roar of the oncoming breakers was multiplied tenfold, then it seemed to Blanche that she must utter a loud cry or fall into the nothingness of death. She gripped the wooden bench with both hands to steady herself, clenched her

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teeth, and stared fixedly and frowningly at the farthest surf-ridge, golden above a wall of golden scales in sunshine, and beat something back into the dead silence of a woman's inmost heart. "Why—of course," she said presently in a curiously dry tone, "of Isobel."

"Her people," he continued, too much preoccupied to observe more than some slight physical discomfort in the woman whose heart was being broken at his side, "would never hear of such a thing—her father would confound my impertinence and wonder at my infernal cheek. We come of a humble stock; my forefathers were probably herding sheep in the south, while that kilted beast's were stealing them on the Border."

"To which kilted beast you allude, I don't know. But if you think blood has any chance against money in these days, you must be blind indeed. Why a poor Irish peer of the very bluest blood—if there is any left—would jump at a millionaire's son——"

"But an obscure fellow with no distinction? Then—she is such a star—you couldn't get near her last night—they were buzzing round her like bees, and no wonder. How could she care for me? They call me a prig, I can't think why. I mayn't be as skangy as some men; I don't allude to everything in Heaven and earth with jocular contempt; I don't pretend to be a greater beast than I am. Why should I?"

"Dear Mr. Bassett, you wear your vices with so little swagger that you cannot wonder if people credit you with the seven deadly virtues."

"Ah! *you* think me a prig!"

"No, Adrian, dear Adrian, I think nothing of the kind—I—I—think you are far too good for any mortal woman, so does Isobel."

"One may as well be too bad as too good. Better—because faults may be mended."

"Are virtues quite incurable? Upon my word, I begin to think yours are. For pity's sake try a little

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healthy conceit—tell yourself that no girl can resist you, and go in and—*win*. Pray, who sent you flowers from your mother's garden when you were ill ? ”

“An angel of pity.”

“ Shall I tell you what she did when she heard how the flowers healed you ? No, I will not—you don't deserve it—you—you stupid fellow ! ”

“ Blanche—what *have* I done ?—Why do you cry ? ”

“ Oh ! because I am tired—and cross and cold—it's over.”

“ What a brute I've been, and what a fool, boring you to death—keeping you in the cold. Let me put this coat round you.”

Then they hastened away in the brightness—the sun was fully risen now and the chill going—joined the swimmers who had emerged, crimson and fresh and hungry, from the sea, and went home, a joyous diminishing party, half ashamed to meet the fishers and people going to work in the bright sunbeams.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE LINKS

THE long sunshiny Medal Day, ending in the longer night of pleasure, had been one joyous romance, in which even the acid of the last dance and, of Isobel's absence from the moonlight adventure was of the kind that sweetens sweetness, like the latent sharpness of ripe fruit. All that glamour of moonlight and shadow, of sea and mountain and romantic ruin, culminating in the glorious dawn that brought such bright hope, had lifted the dreamy poetic youth to those dizzy mental heights whence it is usual to fall plumb to the lowest depths.

So next day Adrian fell headlong back into the old trouble of the summer.

It began in the contrast between the workpeople going out to the day's work and the gay party going home to the day's pleasure. Some unkempt women, opening doors and leaning on the brooms that had swept dust into the sunny freshness, seemed tired already—the sleep was hardly out of their heavy eyes, they looked up and down the road with dissatisfied glances that seemed vainly demanding some pleasure or profit from the new bright day. A fish-wife, bowed under a heavy creel, cast a disparaging eye on the party as she passed; a dour-visaged working-man glowered grim disapproval from under a bonnet. They thought him an elder of the kirk at least from the austere morality of his bearing, until Lismore, who knew him well, said that the drunker

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Donald Blair was the more pious he looked, and that he never knew mortal man carry his whisky with greater solemnity.

Two or three people were coming out of the little iron chapel by the sea, their faces calm and uplifted. The sight of them filled Adrian with something like homesickness.

Having seen Sir Daniel off, and in that dutiful act been blessed by a momentary vision of Isobel, and breakfasted and taken a header from the rocks, he shook the old trouble of the world's misery off again and went on the links with Lulworth, who had been one of the party to the moonlit ruin, and was as fresh as a lark. Bassett's caddie had not kept the morning tryst, so he lay on the grass and watched Lulworth driving off the tee and thought of all that had been said at dawn by the Culdee Church, with an undercurrent of self-reproach, the sort of compunction people feel for accidentally hurting some small domestic animal. His friendship for Blanche was deep and genuine, deeper than he knew; not only did she breathe the aroma of the rose so near to her, but also she was much to be treasured as the one woman in the world for Airedale, whose silent and unobtrusive worship had not passed unobserved by his most intimate friend. The face of Blanche, so death-white and overtired, the darkness and brilliance of her eyes and something new in her voice, haunted him. Those great soft eyes were pathetic; all about her there was an atmosphere of hidden tragedy. Yet she was gay and accounted happy. Was it the shadow of the world's sorrow lying heavy on her heart as so often on his? Clearly there was something.

A strange caddie came up to him with his bundle of clubs and the intelligence that Donald Mactaggart, his own caddie, was "no that weel the morn," and praying him to accept his services instead, with references to aged caddies of high repute on the ground. This Wullie Grierson, the

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substitute, a stout lad of fourteen, with a broad, freckled face handsomely embellished by a purple eye, was pronounced by old David a braw laddie and gey quick with the clubs. Wullie looked anxiously at Adrian during this encomium, open-mouthed and slightly panting, thus diffusing an unmistakable odour of spirits upon the air.

"Why the youngster has been drinking," cried Adrian, "and fighting too."

"No the morn," pleaded Wullie, and David explained that Gold Medal Day being great enough to involve whisky in exceptional plenty, most of the boys had naturally been gloriously drunk in honour of the winner overnight, and had expressed their feelings in a little festal fighting.

"'Twas but a wee drappie I had," Wullie whined, "and I'm no sick the day, like Donald Mactaggart."

"These children!" cried Adrian. "Mactaggart hardly fifteen."

"And the face of him all bashed to bittocks," commented Wullie, with unction. "Eh! but it was a grand fight—a grand fight."

"Has your father thrashed you yet?" Adrian asked. "No? Just come here then, you little whisky-drinking beast."

"The puir laddie was not to say drunk," David remonstrated, while Wullie quickly put a discreet width of turf between himself and his patron, whose movements he eyed watchfully. "He comes of richt honest folk, and is quick and clever and careful at the golf. Grierson would not be beating the lad for a sup of whisky. Eh! but it's gey cauld work whiles carrying the clubs, and gentlemen will be free with the silver. Fechting, is it? A ding in the eye, is it? Did ye no fecht yoursel at the schule, sir?"

"Carry the clubs home, you young villain, and show me Mactaggart's house, and if you ever come near me reeking of whisky again you'll find that I know how to lay on,"

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Bassett said, sickened by old David's long and moralizing account of caddies' lives and labours. These two boys were just old enough for Eton and practically their own masters. Their active lives in the keen open air ought to have been healthy and happy and prosperous with a little discipline and restraint. The pity of it! young boys ruined by serving men's pleasures. Yet the men were scarcely to blame. And yet, when one came to think of it, the callings that minister to pleasure are, broadly speaking, ruinous to those who pursue them. But surely not of necessity. His heart went out to the freckled face and shrewd grey eyes beside him; he gave the sturdy figure a friendly cuff and drew his history out of him bit by bit, and it made him very sad.

Mactaggart lived down by the harbour, whither Wullie guided Bassett through wynds and along rows of cots swarming with barefooted children and weather-beaten, scantily-clad women, through dirt and rags and evil smells, above which that of fish soared triumphant and all-pervading. Many of the children had bandages on their bare feet, and all were exceedingly dirty, and ignorant of the commonest decencies of life. Up a narrow wynd, dark in the glorious noonday, and up an outside stair, Adrian climbed, and was admitted into a low, dark, ill-smelling room, in which an old woman cowered over a small fire stirring something in a pot, and a young one sat on a three-legged crepie stool nursing a baby; heavy stertorous breathing issued from a small box-bed, a near approach to which disclosed the motionless figure and sadly bashed face of the unfortunate caddie; golf clubs and pipes adorned the walls, else bare enough; the one window was small, dusty, and hermetically closed.

"He is not asleep," Adrian said after some minutes of silent observation, "he is ill."

The old woman, who proved to be not so very old and the mother of Donald, said it was only the whisky he was

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sleeping off; the gash on the head was nothing; it had bled freely. Life was hard; only Donald stood between her and want; and he had been brought home like that, battered and senseless, in the small hours, without a penny in his pocket, for all the good money he got, though a better caddie there was not on the links, or a better son when sober.

An hour later found Adrian on Kirk Hill by the gun, where he had been with Blanche at dawn, sick at heart and face to face with the old spectre of misery, vice, and degradation.

Not that he had never seen boys young as these drunk at Eton, but not like this, not openly and permittedly and as a usual thing. Wullie, on interrogation, had admitted that drunken caddies never reached the summit of their calling as professional golfers or keepers of golfing grounds, and that even hard drinkers rarely grew into caddies of repute, but fell off into wastrels and ne'er-do-weels if they survived. The way of perfection to caddies was undoubtedly one of total abstention from whisky, but was rarely followed, being too thorny for Scotch flesh and blood. A doctor having been fetched, he found Mactaggart in a dangerous condition between drink and concussion of the brain, and Adrian remembered that, as he had not been playing on the Medal Day, he had tipped the boy handsomely in sheer gladness of heart, and Donald had carried clubs for a great golfer who had doubtless done the same. And there he lay, a mass of bruised flesh steeped in spirits, in the squalid, airless home, where neither quiet nor decency seemed possible. And that girl, neither married nor ashamed, and those other girls and women, cleaning fish at their doors, and apparently never cleaning anything else, scantily clothed, overburdened with heavy work, living hard, joyless lives among swarming children and drinking men in their crowded, squalid rooms, in such bitter contrast to the luxury and comfort and cleanliness of the enormous hotel, where that morning's

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breakfast alone would have dined half the fisher population sumptuously? While these work-powered women, whose youth had been crushed out of them before maturity, had watched, heavy-eyed and fearful, in these comfortless hovels for the home-coming of son or husband sodden with drink after the long day's work, the ball had run its course gaily—lovely women, beautiful costumes, diamonds, flower-scents, buoyant music, and every refined delight of sense for the rich, whose day had been one long pastime in sunlit air—but for the poor? After two thousand years!

The Culdee Church hard by witnessed to a Christianity traditionally derived from St. Paul; it had been torn down by the hands that built the cathedral, that was laid waste in turn by the forefathers of the worshippers in the grim bare church yonder, whose stern creed even now prevailed and cared little in its cold and cruel dogma for the miserable humanity at its doors. The strong Culdee foundations remained, and the cathedral's maimed beauty still bore witness to a fuller and more perfect Christianity, and empty St. Rule still towered over all in unshaken strength. But had the day of their prosperity seen better things? Or did those bygone folk try to push back the ocean with hayforks? Did they even try to do that? Just in sight was that window in the Castle from which Beaton watched Wishart burning at the stake, and from which his own murdered body was afterwards hung in sight of all. Was that the fruit of the thirty-three sinless years, or—was Christianity yet to be?

These squalid homes lay foul and dark in full sight of the glorious, sunlit sea, whence keen, salt airs rushed exultant upon their crowded walls and windows hermetically closed against the healthful sea breath. Earth was so beautiful, life so joyous, lives so wretched. Harvest still glowed upon the cliffs yonder; the sea broke with a glorious voice upon the castled headland; surf foamed

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snowy in warm sunlight on the rocky base ; the tide was half out ; still pools, lying between long ribs of rock and reflecting clear sky and cloud-mountains, were inlaid plaques of opal and turquoise ; flocks of sea-fowl of every size down to tiniest kittiwakes hovered above the wave-crests and settled like living snow upon the brown, wet rock-ribs ; beyond the bay the mountain slopes rose dream-like in aerial hues in a dream-like autumn sky—and that young lad lay livid and senseless in the whisky-reek, and those young girls—they were but a stone's-throw away—were fading in squalor and degradation.

So many centuries since Francis of Assisi took poverty to wife, and of what avail to man had those espousals been ? The poor are always to be with us, but surely not the abjectly, indecently, viciously poor ? Who could endure wealth and enjoyment while that open sore ran ? Bassett's last coin had vanished during the slum walk, and he knew that in all probability every penny had by this time harmed somebody.* But what can one do ?

In the pain of such thoughts his eyes shut on the beautiful, pitiless world that would be so gay while its children were so wretched, and he lapsed into drowsiness. Confused, joyous sounds roused him presently, and he looked up and saw a little troop of those same ragged, barefoot boys for whom his heart ached romping across the road out of the slums, just as Eton boys or any others romp and riot along in the crazy effervescence of animal spirits. They slipped, shouting and laughing, down by the castle, and danced over a long, slippery rock-rib, their bare feet clinging easily to the seaweedy surface. In a minute they had reached a broad, opal-tinted rock-pool, in another their dingy rags were shed, and the clear water mirrored the grace of lithe, pink bodies in ecstasy of exuberant motion. The battered castle echoed with merry shouts and laughter ; the Abbey walls rang with them ; the jewel surface of the shallow pool was shattered by dancing, romping figures, plunging one over

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the other, lying down and kicking up fountains of sparkling water, getting up and knocking one another down, always in perfect good humour and jollity.^o It was the gay and graceful revel of elves rather than of mortal boys; even Eton fellows never laughed with such bright, spontaneous, irresponsible gladness as this.

Very soon the slender pink figures slipped back to the rocks one after the other with kittenish trickery and frolic, and drew the dingy hulls they had cast once more over their shining bodies, and a ragged, barefoot troop was mirrored in the turquoise and opal pool. Then they sang to some gay, cheerful old Scotch tune with a march in it, and one of them played on a toy instrument, and so, all in ordered gaiety and grace, they danced back over the wet rock-rib, climbed up by the Castle, across the sunny road, and vanished round the corner, leaving Adrian with wet eyes and a deeply moved heart.

This joyous masque had passed like a dream, leaving the long brown rock-ribs solitary and silent but for the quiet plash of ebbing waves. Surely it was a vision. But the sun was warm and the sea-birds rose and settled and rose again from the rocks. Down in the harbour a brown-sailed fishing coble was landing its freight. The idle sail flapped; he heard it ring as it slipped down the mast; and blue-clad, barefooted men stepped out and up on to the matted seaweed covering the rocks, marching as the boys had done in single file along another rock-rib, and passed before the Culdee Church to the Castle, each with a creel of fish on his back and each with a healthy glow on his face. These called cheerily to each other and sang, as they stepped smartly along the slippery weed, or splashed into jewel-like plaques of water; and they too vanished round the corner as the lads had done, and the sea-mews settled again like clouds of living snow on the rock. Was it all a vision?

Wordsworth would have composed a poem on the dancing boys and singing men; it might have been in

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the doggerel of Peter Bell, or it might have been like "a violet by a mossy stone." Adrian felt the poem like a celestial vision in the depth of his inmost heart. Was not the gladness of Heaven over all? Was any denied the deep elemental joys of life?

"Money bulks too largely in your vision of life," Blanche told him once, and even Airedale hinted something of the kind. "You think too much of material well-being," he said.

"Come along, Wullie," he cried, springing up when the boy came round that same corner into the road, on his return from an errand for his new master. "Look here, young un," he said, throwing an arm round the surprised caddie's shoulders, "you are never going so much as to sniff whisky again till you are at least one-and-twenty. If you do, I shall come back and bash you into a jelly, and if you don't you'll be one of my best friends."

Wullie, borne along the road at a quick walk by an arm he knew to be strong and capable, listened open-mouthed while Adrian opened his moved heart as he rarely did or could, and won the whole-hearted, life-long devotion a boy can give to an elder whom he both admires and fears and of whose sincerity he has no doubt. And then Adrian, having given the boy a noble dinner and appointed him caddie for the rest of his stay, shook off the wild notions that had come to him, deciding to leave the world's misery in abeyance till his nerves were stronger and he had taken his degree, and the gladness of his youth came back to him and a deep humility filled his heart.

That evening he asked and obtained audience of Lord Kilmeny, who carefully dissembled the satisfaction he felt at the prospect of such a golden match, and made it understood that the greatest favour at present possible was permission to pay court. Prospects were all very well, but no engagement, much less marriage, could be

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based upon prospects alone; there must be achievement, and at least the choice of some settled career—he used that unpleasant word. After taking honours, or at least coming out well, he would suggest public life or diplomacy. He was glad to hear that the bar was contemplated as a first step; the post of secretary to some public man might be an even finer education. That capacity, even talent, existed he was sure; the great thing was to avoid dissipating power and youth in idleness or aimless energy. His daughter had been trained to fill a great position; she was not without gifts of mind and person essential to such. Isobel in these things surpassed her sisters; young as she was, her character already showed ambition and social ability.

The suitor was appalled but not daunted by this interview and the Polonius counsels tendered to his youth; Kilmeny was secretly amused at the simplicity and naturalness with which they were received, also inclined to doubt whether a nature so single-hearted and sincere was quite the best fitted to breast the turbid sea of political life; but he was quite sure that the youth was no fool and would make a good husband, and only hoped his girl would not throw away her chance, as giddy girls so often do.

So some bright hours were passed in the midst of stinging winds and driving mists; and on one golden afternoon that issued heavenly fair from grey mist-folds, two young people roamed about the edge of the links and stood by the sand-dunes facing a sapphire sea that advanced in long, foam-crested ridges in ordered march, innumerable, "terrible as an army with banners," to break in sheets of rose-tinged surf on the sands. And there some words were spoken and a promise was given to the music of trampling surf and the deep organ boom of that quiet sea.

Blanche and Lulworth met them as they came up through the ladies' links, and knew—or at least Blanche

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knew—by the still light in Isobel's face and the proud glow in Adrienne's, that a fateful moment in those two lives had arrived. They all walked home together; a strange lost feeling came upon Blanche, and Lulworth wondered what spirit of silence had entered into his three friends, and maintained that after all St. Andrews was a very slack place, and those damp winds fit to take the stiffening out of a kitchen poker or a University Don.

And when Blanche had reached her room and was beginning in a sort of dazed dream to let down her hair and get into evening clothes, she was little surprised to hear a light, imperative knock at her door followed by the impetuous inrush of Isobel, with eyes like glowing sapphires.

"I'm so happy," she cried, throwing her arms round Blanche's neck, and burying her face on her shoulder, "so awfully happy."

"It is not to be an engagement," she added presently, lifting a wet flushed face from its shelter; "he won't let me be bound—besides, father says we are too young—only an understanding; and no creature, especially Biddy, is to know, but just best friends, like you and Aire-dale and Georgie Lulworth."

"Be true to him, Belle," Blanche said after another silent embrace; "he is worth it."

"I never cared for any other man," Isobel said presently. "And it began that first afternoon when we saw him asleep under the tree."

"Last June," Blanche sighed dreamily.

"Why, Blanche, what is the matter?" Isobel asked, looking up suddenly from her shoulder. "Why are you so white?"

"I'm always white—to match my name, I suppose."

"Not like this, and you have such a drawn, strained look in the eyes."

"Old age, Belle, premature old age. Come, come, run and dress; we shall both be late."

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Next day Adrian and Lulworth left the ancient city and went south to celebrate George's coming of age, and so it came to pass that "St. Andrews by the Northern sea" became a haunted town to at least three people.

CHAPTER X

COMING OF AGE

DOWN in a chalk county not far from the cathedral city where Archdeacon Ingram passed a considerable part of his life, and under the shadow of the massive tower of which his daughter Blanche had grown up a thoughtful, troublesome child, wide-eyed and wistful as a spirit that had strayed from some other world, stood a moss-grown manor-house, surrounded by beech plantations, in a small depression or chancel in the long roll of downs where a little village nestled round a square, moss-grown tower.

Here many generations of Lulworths had been born and reared and laid to rest beneath the chancel pavement or the churchyard turf, and here, about the golden close of a calm October day, Bassett came with his faithful friend.

"It isn't such a bad old barn, after all," George said, when the dogcart swung round a sharp corner and the small grey gabled house, backed by orange brown of beeches and hung with crimson and gold creeper mixed with ivy, showed cheery and home-like in the last warm glow.

It was really delightful, with its air of cheerful content, and homely comfort, embodying the ideal "small house and great quiet"; though how all the Lulworth tribe, which included a third generation in the person of an aged aunt, were accommodated in that pleasant nest, was a mystery to speculative minds.

At the first sound of the horse's trot the quiet was

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dissipated by the joyous barking of a series of dogs; a troop of which flew out, dancing delightfully round the cart; the opened hall door flung out a red fan of firelight, and a handful of girls and boys tumbled out with joyous welcomes and patted the smoking steed chafing at the bit. The father and mother stood, with old-fashioned hospitality, on the steps at the door; George, hustled from one to another and hugged without ceremony, was passed on to them; and in the midst of a joyous, confused clatter of voices, they found themselves by the hall fire, before a table spread with tea, and here the red flicker of the hearth danced on the square features of Airedale rising from a confused medley of children, cats, and dogs.

"Now, dear Adrian, I hope you can eat some hot cake. Mrs. Burton remembered that you liked it—not more than seven years ago. It is her welcome to you."

"Dear Mrs. Lulworth, I've forgotten neither Mrs. Burton nor her cakes, nor the smackings I got from her,"

"I wasn't borned then," said a blue-eyed girl at his knee. "I'se Tinnie."

"Sweep these youngsters off to the nursery, Emmie, they are a perfect pest," commanded their father in a well-known formula that no one ever took the slightest notice of. "Well, Adrian, your father seems to have made a great impression in the north. I wish we had him on our side. Here's George in the red republican phase, the scamp, along with you, of course."

Adrian confessed that he scarcely knew where he was, and could not understand how men contrived to give a whole allegiance to any party, and the genial squire, whose dress and appearance and weather-ruddied face betokened the working farmer, gave him to understand that in the early twenties such a state of mind was not unhopeful, and might alter with time.

"We have done very well with party government, and if, as seems possible, we have done with it, I don't know what is to become of us," he said. "We are being

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swept off the land as it is. Come and see your room, lad."

Stumbling on their way through narrow passages and up and down short and steep and unexpectedly winding stairs, by the flicker of a solitary candle, they met a cherry-cheeked girl, who set down a basket of wine to offer her hand, dimpling into smiles of welcome.

"Did you remember bin twenty, Maude?" her father asked, holding the hand candle to the dusty bottles.

"You have never been all the way down to the cellar in the dark among the ghosts?" Adrian said.

"Worse than ghosts—rats," with more dimples. "Won't Georgie jump for joy. But if he loses a ferret, he must act butler, I simply won't. Ghosts I can face and rats, but ferrets I bar."

"Well, and what can you *do*?" asked the aged aunt with sudden and startling emphasis, increased by the presentation of an ear-trumpet for reply, when the latest guest approached Miss Lulworth's arm-chair by the drawing-room fire after dinner.

"Do?" Oh! Lord!" he muttered, completely routed by the raking fire of this unexpected broadside; "I'm blest if I think I can do anything."

"Hey? Hey? What does he say? Play the fiddle? Play the fiddle?" she asked impatiently, to the delight of the younger Lulworths and secret chuckles of Airedale and George.

"Please, Aunt Jane, he says he can't do *anything*," shouted a solemn boy of twelve.

"Then what on earth did he come for?" cried the old lady in helpless indignation, not lessened by the universal explosion of laughter.

"To be taken down a peg," Lulworth screamed through the trumpet.

"She means, can you swallow carving-knives, or do the giddy goat?" the lady of the wine-basket explained,

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“or sing comic songs, or hammer up decorations, like Lord Airedale?”

The next day brought ample opportunity of convincing Miss Lulworth that even a university man is not without his uses. There was carrying and mounting of ladders, and nailing up of evergreen ropes and flags and tin sconces in the barn, fetching of chairs and benches and clothes-baskets full of flowers and fruit and cakes, under the direction of half a dozen laughing girls, also conveying and misunderstanding messages, confusing harassed servants by contradictory orders, and shaking down apples amidst a grand romp of all the children and all the dogs—a morning of hard labour and whole-hearted enjoyment, in which the female portion of the family did such deeds as put the men on their mettle and spurred them to do their utmost.

“But why wear your sisters out like this?” the rich man’s son asked Lulworth. “Why not send for half a dozen men and a few score of fairy lamps and Chinese lanterns?”

“Oh, my dear chap, that would cost pounds, two or three guineas at least, and guineas don’t grow on hedges hereabouts.”

This was obvious by many tokens. Never had Bassett seen so much enjoyment linked with such paucity of guineas, or even half as much dignity and refinement. Every daughter seemed to fill some special domestic office; yet, for all their boyish exuberance of life and spirit, each girl bore the unmistakable stamp of good breeding, nor was any below the average in intelligence and general information. They were a well-favoured set, wearing their simple dress with grace and distinction, frank and friendly, but never letting any one forget what was due to their sex, of the charm of which they had their full share. Adrian was surprised at their intimacy with cottagers and workpeople, with whom they seemed to form but one family, yet they always held their place.

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"Now, Miss Maude, couldn't ye put up some more of them red dahlias?—No, Miss Ethel, ye can't have no more greens. Shrubs is entirely spoilt already.—Be off indoors to governess, little missie, and doant 'ee gather they roases—I can't hae no young ladies in this here house—that ain't so to say entirely according to *my* fancy, Miss Lulworth——" Praise, blame, or suggestion, anger or content, all in a certain tone or air of respect, finely shaded off from a rougher and sterner, but still respectful, manner to the boys.

Another surprise was at the tenants' dinner, when the heir, looking prettier and more boyish than ever, sat grave and unabashed at the drinking of his health with a hearty three-times-three that made the candles flicker in their sconces, and then rose and quite simply and unaffectedly thanked them in a few plain words, with a very faint choke when referring to old times and those to come after. How different from the coming of age celebrated over a year ago with pomp and circumstance and lavish luxury at Bassett Towers. What a weariness that had been, and how dreadful the necessity of making that long-pondered reply to the health-drinking, with secret shivers of nervousness and a miserable feeling that the painfully chosen words did not ring true. The whole of that gorgeous function had left an impression of unreality; the congratulations and speechifyings of the numerous and prosperous tenantry had seemed perfunctory and without heart, the feastings and entertainments of cottagers and workpeople wholesale and impersonal, coming from the purse not the heart, and received critically and without gratitude. All the series of sumptuous fêtes seemed to say, "Great are the Bassetts of Bassett Towers"; and all the fêtes seemed to be thinking, "These mushroom Bassetts are but a petty folk and all their gold tinsel."

Nor had any choking come to his voice or moisture to his eyes during his careful and conscientious oration; he was vividly conscious that Bassett was not "the old

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place" to him, but to Airedale; the new-minted splendour of the Towers had little hold upon his affections. As for the tenants, mostly prosperous and even wealthy, they were but familiar names; the model villagers were too much like stage supers; the name of Bassett was obviously sweet to them only as a source of gain. But here, in this homely barn decked out with home-grown leaves and flowers and crudely-coloured bunting, was a real sovereignty and a true bond of life-long affection and mutual respect. The tenants were chiefly poor men, with rough, weather-beaten faces, their wives hard-working and simple. The fare was plain and plentiful, the music local and voluntary, the manners good; there was no sign of money anywhere. That alone gave distinction to the feast.

"The Lulworths have always been much loved," Archdeacon Ingram told Adrian, when the tables were being cleared away for the dance, "it is quite a tradition in the family, which is one of the oldest in the kingdom."

"After all, what is an old family?" Airedale asked. "Is it a long-known family? Most cottagers have come down in unbroken descent from Saxon ceorls, if they could but trace what has seldom or never been set on record. Also, many a field labourer comes of a noble or gentle stock fallen on evil days in some collateral branch."

"Oh, if you come to that, we are all descended from Adam. That is," Adrian amended, "we used to be. Nowadays we trace our descent higher, from that well-known and august personage, the anthropoid ape."

"I hope you like our people, Bassett," said Lulworth, coming up to them. "They are a good-hearted lot and have precious hard times. Yet every man's rent has been lowered three times within my memory, besides some farms having gone out of cultivation altogether."

"A splendid set, Geordie. They look as if they thought life worth living. And yet how can they, poor chaps?"

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"I'm blest if I know; unless they enjoy the credit of being jolly under adverse circumstances."

"Even that fails poor Cox," the Archdeacon said; "he told me just now that he was ashamed to be here, after being let off two successive years' rent. But this is to be the last, he has sworn it. Another bad season and off he goes."

"Oh, he'll turn up smiling yet," George maintained cheerfully; "he can't have ill-luck three years running. Last year it was a wet lambing season, and his land lies low. This year his own dog worried the ewes. Poor old boy, he looks like a dyspeptic and stone-broke Jeremiah with a bill to meet," he added, leaving them for a melancholy man with a ruddy face and a thick brown beard.

"Evidently Jeremiah's bill is met or at least his dyspepsia cured," the Archdeacon commented, with a smile of quiet enjoyment at the sudden brightening of the man's face.

"Both to judge from the breadth of his grin," Airedale said.

"The old order changeth," the Archdeacon sighed. "I sometimes wonder what sort of an England you lads will see when your heads are grey and ours dust. A close-meshed network of railways, spotted with industrial centres and relieved with garden cities and people's parks. Beauty annihilated, nothing left but a few market gardens on the sites of some of the biggest farms."

"Luckily our land is too poor to pay for cultivation," said the squire, with a twinkle, "so at least we shall be left unimproved."

"No, sir," Airedale objected, "you will be people's parked, or the besom of improvement will sweep you into a suburb. In the north of England a hill or two may be left, perhaps."

"Ay, perhaps," the squire conceded, "with a huge hotel at the top of each and a motor track coiling round it. Every lake will be a reservoir for some new Man-

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chester's waterworks ; all rivers and waterfalls will be diverted to generate electricity. The moor^s now——"

"They will be health resorts, open-air curing houses," Bassett imagined, "unless they and the downs and hills are all levelled for electric tramways and rifle ranges. The few church towers left will be turned into posts for advertising cheap excursions to the Arctic regions and the Equator, or return balloon tickets to Mars, or limited companies for developing Venus and opening mining claims in the moon. Luckily the sea will be left ; that can neither be improved nor developed."

"Only covered with oil to smooth the waves, and dotted with submarine devilries and torpedoes warranted to explode only and always under passenger and merchant craft," Airedale corrected.

"And who is the villain of the piece ? " Mr. Lulworth wished to know.

"Greed, Mechanical Invention, Industrialism, and the Adversary and Accuser of Mankind," he heard from different sources ; but that we are certainly too rich they were all agreed, when the violins and 'cellos joined with flageolets and hautboys to strike up the first dance.

The rich man's son pondered on this sentence in all the mazes of the robust set of lancers, through which he followed, rather than led, a buxom partner, who enjoyed every step and turn of the dance and every note of the music with a heartiness that might have exhilarated a Timon or an early Egyptian solitary. But when Bassett heard that Reggie, the second Lulworth boy, had hardly two days' leave for the birthday from the distant bank in which he was a junior clerk, passing rich on forty pounds a year, and Mr. Lulworth expressed a rather distant hope that the next boy might get into the army through the militia, and regretted the probability of being unable to give the elder girls a season in town next year, and pointed out, at the cottagers' entertainment that took place on the following day, the father of twelve,

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a man of five-and-forty, whose wage was twelve shillings a week and who had never been on the parish—though, as the man himself afterwards told him, he had been through hard times now and again, and thanked Heaven he and his missus had always been blessed with good health and good appetites—why, then, Dan Bassett's son thought that a little superfluous wealth might not be a regrettable circumstance in those parts.

"Why, my dear lad," the Archdeacon said, when he wanted to entrust him with alms for the people, "the only really poor man in the parish besides the unlucky Cox is Lulworth. I can't pauperize the place with this enormous gift; I'll cheerfully accept a couple of pounds for the winter charities, no more. But Lulworth—one is sorry for him; he and his caste, the very backbone of the country, are doomed. Where shall we find their substitute? What do the great employers of labour know, or care to know, of the men on whose labour their enormous wealth is partly based?"

Adrian suggested the names of two firms familiar to lovers of chocolate.

"Brilliant exceptions, they are on the right tack," the Archdeacon granted; "but where is the personal link? the friendliness, the almost family affection? Philanthropy is all very well, but it only touches the outside, the material necessity. Christian charity means something warmer and deeper."

"Might the great employers recognize that and try to act on it? That is a dream of your daughter's."

"Blanche is a good girl, and she dreams rather prettily, poor child."

"Her dreams are infectious and cheering. Yes, Mr. Archdeacon, one wants cheering sometimes," Adrian said in the hush that followed a roar of laughter provoked by the mild fooling of the Lulworth boys, who were giving a popular entertainment with banjos and blacked faces. "You may think me a fool, but I tell you that the readi-

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ness to enjoy and the childlike, eager delight in obvious and simple—pleasures, do I say? rather everyday necessities—of people whose life is one long denial, is to me pathetic beyond words. I could better bear the sight of actual suffering."

"My dear boy," the Archdeacon said; he could say no more, and the candles, evergreens, and merry-makers all merged in a misty blur, while he silently thanked Heaven for a folly more precious than any wisdom, and the laughter of homely voices rang in his ears with that newly suggested note of pathos. "Only, don't exaggerate the value of money," he said, when a movement of the crowd separated them, and Adrian took his place with the glee-singers on a platform of dubious stability, and the piano tinkled with more decision than accuracy under the firm fingers of the cheerfully dimpling Maude, and all the voices, none more than a crotchet behind or an octave false, sang with great gusto:—

"There was an English ladye bright,
(The sun shines fair on Carlisle Wall,)
And she would marry a Scottish knight;
For love will still be lord of all."

That reproach of money value had become chronic of late. What was wrong with giving? Who said, "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor"? Yet Christ gave everything—healing, food, comfort, reproof, sympathy, even the gladness and gaiety of wine, and—once, a scourge—money never. And that solitary scourge was for those who traded where they should have prayed.

"That wine she had not tasted well,
(The sun shines fair on Carlisle Wall)."

"Look out, Bass, if you shift an inch to the right the whole show will be down," Lulworth whispered.

"When dead in her true love's arms she fell,
For love shall still be lord of all."

"It's only two big barn doors laid athwart three kitchen

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tables," Lulworth murmured, when one of the tenors nearly tipped his side up in the agitation of catching a high note.

"For love *shall* still be lord of all,"

the rich man's son sang with the others, when he caught the dispirited glance of that poor Cox, whose rent had twice been remitted.

Some weeks later a handsome provision for the next year's rent found its way mysteriously to the poor farmer's pockets and as mysteriously the father of twelve received an accession to his weekly wage, and the Archdeacon was not as angry as might have been expected.

Two days after the birthday the house-party broke up with a heartache all round and many hospitable adjurations from the host to come again soon.

"I'd rather go to that house than to any I know," Airedale said, when the train began to steam off and the last good-bye had been waved from the platform. "Mr. Lulworth is so genial and they are all so genuine. Mrs. Lulworth is about the most charming woman I ever met. I say, Bass, what makes that house so pleasant? They certainly don't do you well; shaving with two smoky candles in a small and ancient looking-glass with lukewarm water and no fire is enough to make a saint speak up. It can't be the air—after St. Andrews."

No, St. Andrews was not to be named with any spot on earth except Oxford; it might rank a little below Oxford as a dream city, walled with poetry and lighted with the glamour of romance.

Adrian spread a paper before his face, and Airedale knew that inside there was a letter bearing the postmark of the ancient city, and guessed the signature, but not the contents.

"My friend," it began, for the writer could not commit the cold formality of Mr. Bassett to paper, while the familiarity of Adrian was still unwarranted. Once, and only once before, she had called him "my friend," and

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he remembered the heart-music in the lingering voice. The letter incidentally mentioned the number of holes in which Lord Kilmeny had gone round, and the state of the weather ; but its main purpose was to report the progress of Donald Mactaggart's health and Wullie Grierson's abstinence from whisky, both of which were satisfactory. The writer had taken turns with Blanche to pay daily visits to Mactaggart, whose consciousness was now restored, and with it an overpowering desire for whisky. Blanche, who had undertaken the supervision of these youths, and who was also aware that correspondence, except on some special occasion, was interdicted between the pair, had deputed Isobel to say that there was little chance of sobriety for Mactaggart while his mother sat near him all day stupidly absorbing spirits as flowers absorb sunshine ; so what was to be done ? Blanche begged, on the ground of laziness, to be excused the letter she had promised on the subject. " But she is incapable of any such engaging vice," the writer added, " and is probably only paying the just penalty of a too flagrant virtue. You remember how furiously active she was in that dreadful settlement that nearly finished you in the summer, and she has the reputation of being one of the most awful swots in her college, and, as I tell her, no constitution can be expected to stand such excesses and if she doesn't take care she will have to stay down this term. Perhaps it is only that this Scotch sea-air is too strong for her, poor dear. She won't have that at any price, and clings to the place, reminding one of all the Scotch songs ; she's ' wearin' awa' like snaw wreaths in thaw,' she ' gangs like a ghaist,' and she ' caresna to spin,' or to play golf, or even to snub Biddy and Lismore ; and lets my father say the most dreadful things about the inferiority of the female intellect, and women needing care and protection and nice frocks, without a word. But don't you think St. Andrews is rather fascinating ? Please tell us what we are to do next with these dreadful boys.

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Wullie has confided to me his secret and long-cherished ambition to be chief steward on a mail steamer. I don't know how you *begin* being chief steward ; I am sure that I should always want to leave off."

The Christmas vacation brought a visit to Kilmeny Castle, and a vision of all the daughters of the House of Mostyn flying on Irish steeds over impossible Irish stone walls like a flock of doves, or, as Airedale suggested, a flight of Valkyries ; but then Airedale, who hunted on an animal of mere English blood, more than once saw the flight of the Ladies Mostyn from a sitting position in the middle of a boggy field, where he had been deposited *nolens volens* after a series of unexpected somersaults in mid-air. Bassett, whose mounts were also of Saxon breed, was not entirely unacquainted with a vision of the sisters from the same point of view, yet his enthusiasm was not overthrown with his balance. And yet the Irish visit was a rosy retrospect to dream of over many a solitary pipe and cigar in hours better devoted to the study of classic literature. And, in the thick of the Lent term, Isobel Mostyn was surprised by the receipt of a valentine, a thing heard of, but never before seen. It consisted of a heart-shaped locket, set with diamonds and wedged in the centre of an illuminated page of vellum, inscribed in the slightly disguised handwriting of a student presumably reading for honours, with these lines :—

O the bonnie, bonnie Links beside the bay,
By the city with its ruins grim and grey,
Where the yellow cornfields ripple to the streets
And the sea's far-thundered music ever beats—
O it's there that I would be
By that tempest-furrowed sea !

O the bonnie Links beside the flying spray,
Where the fair queen's spirit hovers night and day,
Sighing, sighing, for the pleasant plains of France
And the gallant knights that trembled at her glance—
O to breathe the breezes free
Of that haunted Northern sea !

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O the bonnie Links, where Eden waters stray,
And the clean-hit ball flies true and hearts are gay,
And the golfer, having made his ten-mile round,
Takes his ease upon the ladies' putting ground ;
 My heart aches for the roar
 Of that billow-trampled shore !

O to roam the bonnie Links again one day,
When the fierce wave-legions sweep in stern array,
With the evening's rose on every battled crest,
And the hills, like weary giants, lie at rest ;—
 In the sunset, I and she,
 By that glad, exulting sea !

PART II

STURM UND DRANG

Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and filled his head,
He went :—

CHAPTER I

THE COTILLON

SOME two years later the quiet of a balmy night in May was broken by the trampling of carriage horses and shouting of footmen and policemen outside Sir Daniel Bassett's sumptuous mansion in Carlton House Terrace, from the lighted windows of which the strains of a blue Hungarian band swelled out intermittently on a richer wave of dance music, and the murmur of many voices came.

It was long past nature's midnight, but not quite the middle of London's restless night, which is, strictly speaking, to-morrow morning. The pavement audience that gathers so readily round the free-gratis pageants of the metropolis had mostly gone home; the cotillon was in full swing.

It is hardly safe to hint at the enormous cost of the cotillon presents at Daniel Bassett's gorgeous great house. The thought of it was sweet to him. He mused upon it while watching the moving brilliance of the crowd of gleaming shoulders and jewelled throats rising from a sea of sumptuous millinery, all bespangled and gilded in twentieth-century mode, as a great poet might muse upon the melodies of a happily inspired poem, or a painter on the subtle beauties of a successful picture. In his old boyish days of hunger and rags he had loved to watch—much harried and hunted by policemen—people going and coming in the splendour of ball costume, often clouded by cloaks and wraps, to such a house as this; it

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had been to him like a page of poetry, a vision of fairy-land, the colour, the glow, and the sparkle of it all the richer because of its remoteness from his own drab and dingy surroundings. And now he was the master of the sumptuous revels, a fact still slightly incredible and all the more delightful. This Dick Whittington was always listening to the bells in that happy, startled half-belief, although he bore for the third time the insignia of mayoralty upon his breast; but he had never dreamed of splendour like this. Once he remembered—on a boat-race day, when every coster cart fluttered with light or dark blue ribbons and the colours were in shop windows and ladies' dresses, and expectation was on tiptoe for the result of that five minutes' swift sweep over Thames waters—he remembered thinking that the sixteen god-like youths smiting the river with strokes too swift to count, between banks of roaring, black-massed humanity, were after all of real flesh and blood like himself, and had been boys of like passions with himself, probably giving and receiving bloody noses and black eyes like himself; and a great wave of glorious emulation had sprung up in his small breast, and he had wondered if and how it were possible to climb to that supreme eminence of rowing in the Varsity race. For his arms were tough and strong already, and it seemed a not impossible thing to thrust and pull back the long blue-bladed oars in rhythmic stroke. He could endure, for he had spent all that cold and cruel spring night and the morning and the noon, half-clad, foodless, by favour of merciful policemen, upon a little space of ground on the Putney shore, and let it during the race to a carriage for five shillings. It was but a flitting dream, quickly dispelled by those he interrogated on the subject, to revive again after many years when he found himself father of a university man who had been a passable wet-bob at Eton. Poor Sir Dan scarcely knew himself, and Adrian never even remotely guessed, what a glorious thing it would have been to him

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to have a son in the boat-race, and read daily in the papers of his weight, condition, and rowing, and hear the deep, long thunder-roar of people cheering on the banks during that superb five minutes' rush over the tide. It was a distinction that he understood, measured for him by the interest and acclamation of the people.

The disappointment of seeing his son pass out of the University creditably but without taking honours was nothing in comparison with his missing the Blue Ribbon, a disappointment he would certainly have been spared if Adrian had divined half its bitterness. It is part of the inevitable tragedy of life that youth and age, especially if near in blood, never understand each other. This, if one considers the matter, is singular, because, though youth has never been old, age has always been young, and might reasonably be expected to remember the experience of early days. In this case the father's youth had been so utterly alien in experience to the son's, and the training of both had been so entirely dissimilar, that the usual divergence of thought and feeling was accentuated. That mad and wild notion of Adrian's that university life was not a stage upon which to dazzle the world by splendid achievement, but a school for the equal and harmonious training of all the faculties, was a thing at which Sir Dan could only pish and pshaw. "Confound it all, Ad," he cried one day in the midst of some such discussion, "can't you see that a man likes to have his money's worth for his money?" To which the son replied that he had gained personally by those college years more than all the gold in Lombard Street could buy.

"You mean you've had a rattling good holiday and lazed away your time as you'd a mind to, you idle young beggar! I've bred you too soft; you are lazy, that's what's the matter with you. Well, you'll have to turn to now and put your shoulder to the wheel in good earnest. Reading for the Bar? No, thank 'ee; two more years

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loafing while you eat dinners with other idle young men. No, no. What you want now is a thorough business training on an office stool, and no nonsense. Don't tell me that the Bar is good preparation for public life. Why, more money is lost at the Bar than in any other profession. Learn to make money and to spend it—you didn't even learn that at Oxford—and that'll fit you for public life, as it did me. Can I speak, or can't I? Can I organize and lead a political campaign, or can't I? And *my* public school was London streets; I had the key of 'em time and again. And *my* college was hard bodily labour by day and hard book learning by night, and never a hand to help me. I suppose I'm one of the largest employers of labour in these islands—let alone the American concerns and the South African mines and the rest—and you'll be the same when I drop. How many men of your age have such a chance?"

It was vain to object that Sir Daniel's great business capacity had not descended to his son, that he neither loved nor had any talent for commerce, or at least the present methods of commerce, or that the public school and university training was not especially designed to create a taste for a sedentary life of any kind.

So the dreamy university student, full of imagination and poetry, adoring beauty and enamoured of great ideas, put his shoulder to the wheel and drudged manfully at ledgers and unriddled the mysteries of markets and quotations, and learnt the A B C of stocks and shares and bulls and bears, and was chained every morning at exactly the same hour to a desk and unloosed at sadly varying hours every night, and learnt to sigh for Sundays and long for Saturday afternoons, and yearn for an hour of the fresh air and freedom and out-of-doors life he had been carefully trained for in those historic playing-fields by Thames waters, and in the pleasant meadows and gardens on Isis banks. After a year spent in the galley of commerce, he was reported to be an average

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clerk, without talent or initiative or any special quality but conscientiousness. A safe, steady drudge was the butterfly that emerged from the chrysalis of the school and college student's brilliant promise and versatility. At least, that was the verdict of Neville Bassett.

Neville Bassett was Sir Daniel's nephew, the brother of Phyllis Thornton, a lean and sallow man inclining to the shady side of thirty, with keen, grey eyes and a rather hard, thin-lipped mouth. An excellent man of business and associated with many of his uncle's commercial undertakings. He had picked up a slight American accent in some years passed chiefly in the States as Sir Daniel's right-hand man. Latterly he had spent some of his energy and force of will in trying to imbue his cousin with the principles of successful commerce, and guide his mind through the difficult mazes of finance. Two phrases were peculiarly his own; he bound them upon his brow and wore them on the border of his garment. One was "There's money in it," the other, "It is business." They were, Adrian soon discovered, final, unanswerable; all the logic in the world, every possible principle, theory, and argument might thunder and wreck itself upon those adamant foundations, and leave them unshaken.

"Well now, Adrian, what *can* you do?" Neville asked one day, when he expressed doubts as to his own capacity for commerce, and the latter, less startled than by old Miss Lulworth's sudden utterance of the same question, replied to the same effect that he could do nothing.

"Well, I guess that's about the size of it," Neville returned, with resignation. "That's what you've been trained to do."

"I've been trained," Adrian said, "for an open-air life of busy leisure and various activity, for enjoyment and social intercourse and for power—that is what public schools do. I've also been trained to think and to feel

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and to hear the other side—that is what universities are supposed to do; but that may not altogether be the best preparation for a commercial life.”

“Well, I judge you’ve had a year’s good training in this office, Ad.”

“If goodness is in direct ratio to unpleasantness,” said Adrian, with a smile that escaped Neville. “Yes, I’ve acquired business habits and an air of respectability and book-keeping by double entry. But why in the name of all that’s perverse my dear old dad should so set his heart on my doing the very last thing I’m fit for, I can’t understand. What a fight poor Gerald had to get off the shop and go soldiering! And what is the sense of trying to make money when you have more than you want? How lavishly my father gives! I can never spend enough to please him.”

“It’s not the money, it’s the game, the great game,” Neville said, almost reverently. “You’ll catch on by and by, and be as keen as the rest. You have to fag at the beginning of everything. Nobody is made Prime Minister straight off. And if you want power—great Scott!—capitalists control the markets of the world and pull the strings of every Cabinet. You’ll catch the money-fever right enough, but you must chuck all your fads and highfalutin notions first and learn to swallow your peck of dirt like a man.”

That was the trouble, the secret, ceaseless sore, the growing fear that enormous wealth cannot be piled with perfectly clean hands, in the face of which dislike of confinement and monotony and keen desire for enjoyment and intellectual activity faded to nothing.

It was now a year and a half since he had been chained to the galley-oar of business, the weight of which increased rather than lessened on his hands with time, though the word partnership had been mentioned and a tempting suggestion of learning some of the foreign and colonial business thrown out. And after all, trade itself was not

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unattractive, but—the methods of trade, the more than dubious ethics of trade. For commerce in the abstract made its appeal to his imagination.

But on this particular May night the galley slave was very gaily and efficiently dancing the cotillon; Sir Daniel thought him the handsomest fellow in the room, and tailored with the perfection that can only be achieved on a well-built, well-borne figure. Neville was doing his part in the function as gallantly; but there was an expatriated look in his face and something of the fatigue that sat leaden upon Phyllis, who was still holding her post against waves of on-rushing guests at the stair-head, as valiantly as Horatius held his on the bridge, and wondering how many times she had said the same things with the same smile during the last few hours, and beginning in the confusion of weariness to welcome departing guests and receive fresh arrivals with regretful farewell.

Not every woman can play the mirror part in the cotillon with both grace and coquetry. Isobel Mostyn did it with distinction; the man wiped off her mirror seemed “to taste delicious death” and be executed with tragic pomp; and even “that Jacob Hildenheim” appeared less blatantly common than usual after being blotted off the glass.

Four strenuous seasons had taken neither the bloom from Isobel's beauty nor the zest from her enjoyment of such brilliant vigils at the end of long days at the social galley. The sparkle of her eye was even more vivid than when first it flashed into Adrian's waking summer dream, and far brighter than the jewel-flash on her neck. Her supple figure was more perfectly rounded, her voice fuller, her bearing more firmly elastic. She was said to be one of the best women fencers in England; she was the despair of Lady Biddy, whose wrist was no longer as steady as it had been, and whose step had lost the springy grace of Isobel's. Poor Biddy's colour was a

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little hard and fixed now, and she was liable to sudden and unaccountable indisposition, accompanied by great excitement and even incoherence. It was called hysteria, a singular malady for an athlete and devotee of outdoor sport. Was there a grain of truth in the whisper that these symptoms were due to a too high appreciation of the beverage of her native land? Lady Eileen was long since married, Lady Patricia was betrothed—sacrificed, Isobel said—to “that young Hildenheim.” Isobel’s engagement had been made public and the wedding-day fixed.

No question of sacrifice in that engagement, Sir Daniel thought; and indeed he must have been dull of perception who could see the young pair together and doubt their mutual attachment. Lord Kilmeny congratulated himself on having exacted that period of probation and partial separation; he thought this marriage the most satisfactory in every respect of any in the family. Sir Dan had been in favour of a shorter engagement, but the terrible fiasco of poor Phyllis Thornton’s match made him shrink from hurrying on another. As for the lady, she had plainly stated that she wanted a little fun before settling down; and while so many fair dames were making havoc of domestic peace by taking their fun after marriage, it seemed a wise precaution against post-nuptial pranks to let this one have hers before. Adrian had been content to wait till the galley-slave life was over; he could not ask the woman he loved to share that dull monotony; it was not the part of prentices to marry; their business was to brighten Sundays and holidays by sweethearting.

Suddenly, while Sir Daniel was watching the brilliant maze of the cotillon unwind itself, he saw Isobel’s face change and darken; then she quivered and turned pale. Adrian, who had seemed to give the shock with the cotillon favour that covered some glittering thing, had also changed colour. Some words passed between them,

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and soon Isobel recovered herself, and all seemed to go gaily as before.

When the programme was played through and the yawning Hungarians were packing up their instruments, and the trot of a single pair of horses echoed away in the dim stillness of true London midnight—that is, early morning—Isobel, flushed and weary, nodded a smiling good night to Adrian on the landing, and was passing on when he stopped her.

“Come out on the balcony,” he said, with a firm hand-grip. She hesitated, perceived that same gravity seen in the cotillon on his face, and shivered slightly. She was cold, tired, sleepy, he heard, but he kept her hand firm.

“I’m in for it now,” she thought, and put her head down and hardened her heart, as if before one of those impossible Irish fences. Adrian wrapped her in a cloak, and drawing her hand through his arm led her into the cool, fast-thinning dusk that is the dark of summer night. Stars were still visible ; there was a faint thrill of warmth in the clear pallor of the east ; the trees in the park rose dim and vague from a sea of shadowy mystery ; sparse lights traced tree-bordered drives, here was the yellow disk of an illuminated clock and here a lighted palace window ; some bird-notes already trembled through the dewy dusk, and flower-scents stole upon the pure and balmy air ; a sentry’s step, a policeman’s tread, and the distant diminishing rumble of market-carts, sounded faint and far in the quiet ; you could almost hear the rhythmic breath of sleeping millions in the deep peace.

“Is it refreshing ?” he asked ; and Isobel gathered a geranium leaf from the balcony plants and pressed its cool sweet velvet to her hot cheek. She gave a little silent nod of assent.

The sounds from the house grew hollow and rare ; the lights were going out in room after room ; Isobel, who was staying in the house, would have given anything to go to bed, but dared not.

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Adrian watched her in silent expectation, hoping for something that never came; her hand was still on his arm, but her face, troubled, almost frightened, was turned away.

Suddenly a great chorus of twitter and cheep and fragmentary bird-song rang out, and a waterfowl cried from the lake. Soon the world would be awake and the house still; he could not wait. "Now," he said at last, and she recognized a challenge, left his arm, turned and faced him.

"Well," she returned, and there was another brief silence while the bird-music grew more definite.

"Won't you tell me?" he asked, a note of tenderness in his voice.

"You shouldn't do it, you shouldn't tempt me," she replied. "Why will you give me such costly things?"

"I never yet gave you anything half or a quarter good enough for you, Isobel, though I gave you all that was best of me—all I had, all I was, without reserve or afterthought, wholly and for ever in that first look." He began in a low level voice, through the calm earnest of which tenderness stole and deepened to passion. Her head sank upon his shoulder, her face was buried. "Adrian," she sighed, "Adrian," and was gathered to his heart.

"But indeed," she added presently, her cheek pressed to his, "I have often wished your presents less costly——"

"As if anything could be costly enough!"

"Of everything you ever gave me I treasure most that bit of white heather you gave me by the sea at St. Andrews—it was the first."

"You won't give that away, Isobel?"

"Did I give this, do you suppose? Where did you find it, Adrian?" she asked, looking up with sudden fear.

"In Venice, in a bric-à-brac shop—my own gift to you for sale—the monogram caught my eye. But though I

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designed the thing myself and it was uncommon, I thought it might be a coincidence, till—till to-night——”

“When you frightened me to death with it. Oh! it was a horrid revenge. You scored there. Are you *very*, *very* angry, Addie?”

“Isobel, suppose you saw a thing you had given me in a shop for sale, what would you think?”

“Dearest, I should think that the shopkeeper had been done uncommonly brown, considering what rubbish I give you.”

“I suspect that it was not the shopkeeper who was done in this case, considering how cheap he let me have it. Isobel, tell me—trust me—was it—was it—Monte Carlo?”

She bent her head as if in assent; he drew a long breath; there was silence.

“Isobel,” he sighed at last, “my Isobel, promise me, promise yourself, never to do that again.”

“What do you mean?” she asked, facing him with a sharp turn.

“Oh!” he cried, with a gesture of despair, “was there ever a sweeter woman, a more womanly woman, than Lady Somersby?”

“Poor darling Aunt Gussie, that’s just it; she’s such a dear, one must do anything for her.”

“And yet it was no trifling love-gift that she played away—only two homes—only—Isobel, you can see all that long misery—you, with that same blood in your veins—and not take warning?”

“Adrian, you can think *that* of *me*?” She started away from him, hotly flushing, her voice full of tenderness yet stern with reproach, and her eyes swimming in tears,

“Oh! I am a brute,” he cried, “and I didn’t think it. But what can I think?”

“Have you forgotten Blue Diamond? *He* cost me a pang. But this pretty costly thing, that I only treasured because you gave it——” her voice failed. “Don’t

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give me any more diamonds, dear," she said, with quick recovery. "Oh! Adrian, I sometimes wish we were both poor. I wish I were going to get up in this sweet, fresh morning and going out to work in a factory or a shop and you were the man who worked the lift, or a policeman, or a postman, and met me on the way and promised to take me to Kew next Sunday, and we were to live in two rooms and save pence in the best teapot. Let me go, dear, everybody is going to bed; they are shutting up the house; let me go."

She was gone. All the east was ruddy now, with a redder heart in its centre, like a great unfolding rose. In another minute the rose had faded, and long thick bars of scarlet lay across a pale pink sky. A little breeze stirred the balmy purity of the air and whispered pleasant things to the tree-tops, and the birds rejoiced greatly with full song and steady chirp. The geraniums Isobel's dress had touched were dewy, their scarlet began to glow out of the thinning dusk as if quickened to life at her touch. He felt the magic of her presence still in the air, in the glowing sky, in the silent purity of that deep brief quiet so soon to be broken by the mighty rush and torrent roar of returning, million-pulsed life. Big Ben solemnly counted out the still hour in deep, reverberating strokes that left the air quivering long, and many a slighter chime took up the tale and repeated it; while the last star vanished and clear blue spaces came through the pink between the scarlet bars laid along the sky. Such a weight was lifted from his heart, such a joy thrilled it. How base to have thought her capable of the madness that had so wrecked the lives of those others of her blood! And yet to see his gift exposed—put up for sale in that shop in Venice! There was no one like Isobel, none. How had such happiness, so full, so deep, been given him? There was terror in such deep intensity of joy. How could he, and yet how could he not, have suspected her?

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He had seen her at Monte Carlo during a flying Christmas visit snatched from that office galley, seen her in the Casino at the tables, flushed, absorbed, quivering, the glitter of the gold heaps reflected in her eyes. "Oh!" she had said when he drew her away, her raked-in winnings jingling in the little embroidered bag she carried, "it's an enchantment, a madness; one can understand how it grows and grows till it is impossible to break the chain. Let me breathe, Adrian; take me down to the sea, up to the hills, anywhere."

They had gone out into the magic of winter moonlight, mellow and mild, with all the hills stretched out shadowy in silver dreamlight, and the bay shimmering like a polished shield under a clear blue vault, full of trembling stars. The Casino music died away into silence so that sea-murmurs became audible, and the peace and purity and freshness of the southern night had visibly descended upon her till he felt the stilling of her pulses; and both agreed, as so often, that of all pleasures and pastimes the most enjoyable and memorable part was always some such glimpse of elemental beauty as that. And so the fear had died out of his heart, only to revive as a dread certainty in Venice, during a Whitsuntide flight thither to meet the Mostyn party on their way home.

He remembered now some vague trouble about Lady Somersby, gathered from Airedale's depression, and recognized that it must have been a repetition of the Blue Diamond incident. Isobel would naturally shrink from telling him—the secret was not her own. Afterwards he heard the real truth, that the poor lady's losses at roulette had been so severe, involving what was not strictly her own, that she had been found by Isobel in a comatose state with an empty chloral phial by her side, only just in time to be restored. Then her trouble had come out, and the card-case, solidly encrusted with diamonds with a ruby monogram, had found its way to a jeweller

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in return for about half its worth. Poor Airedale had also come to the rescue, and the whole transaction had been kept from his father's knowledge.

But Adrian knew enough already to make him happy. He leant out into the morning freshness on the balcony and wondered why he had not trusted her fully, or at least had the courage to end all doubt by a plain question. It is not only conscience that makes cowards of us all.

He went with a lightened heart through the shadowed silent house, where the deserted ball-room looked tawdry and the solid banks of flowers on staircase and corridor shed a heavy fragrance upon emptiness and silence, and strewed marble and parquet and pile carpet with withered petals and broken sprays, and, letting himself out by a back door, unlocked a private entrance and walked across the Park to his chambers, in a quiet invaded by rumbling vans and carts and steps of early workmen. He turned once to look at Isobel's window, behind the drawn blinds of which she was sleeping deliciously, a happy smile on her lips and the recovered diamonds under her pillow.

CHAPTER II

THE QUARREL

IN those days the rich man's son, whose pockets were never empty, sometimes wondered how other men, burdened with painful economies and cabined by endless limitations, managed to live. Airedale's existence seemed one long calculation of avoidable expenses ; Lulworth's of active economies ; Grimsby, reading for the Bar, occupied odd moments in magazine writing, and knew where to get the cheapest and best dinner in London. Now and then he indulged himself in half a crown's worth of opera, stood contentedly to 'hear European stars sing Wagner's music, and walked home in the mud, pipe in mouth. Sometimes he enjoyed the great spectacle of London life from the tops of omnibuses, of ladies' society he saw nothing, but was occasionally seen taking young women, barmaids and shop-girls presumably, to cheap amusements.

"My dear chap," he said one night when Bassett had dined with him in great splendour at the Carlton, "they do you as well at Mangani's for three-and-six, and their white Capri is good enough for an emperor. Cost is no measure of worth. Has it ever struck you that all the really pleasant things are within reach of everybody ?"

"On the contrary, the number of people whose lives are empty of all delight seems to me to grow with every day. What are these really pleasant things ?"

"Sleep, food, laughter, work, and play—also social emotions ; sunshine filtering through leaves and steeping grass in light—no charge for that show ; sea-gulls hover-

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ing over the grey river, and flapping white scimitar wings in misty sun-gleams on a winter's day ; pigeons flashing silver plumes against grey skies and dark trees ; suns setting in cloudy gold and crimson behind purple towers and palaces carved out of dim, ethereal dream-stuff—finest sight in all London town, free to the public on Westminster Bridge every sunny day ; the first violet whiff of spring in the air—it's always a surprise—the balm of summer nights ; the keen sparkle of frost ; the purple glooms of autumn ; and clear moonshine and the friendliness of stars sitting serene in the sky. These are open to everybody, and you can't better them."

Upon this ensued long debate. For was everybody capable of enjoying these elemental delights ? Isobel had spoken of such capacity as one of the secret affinities between them, and both remembered each scene in the drama of their love as set in some frame of natural beauty. The hay-scented afternoon outside the "sweet city" was the prologue, the college gardens in moonlight and sunlight the first act, sunset splendour on the North Sea breakers, "terrible as an army with banners," the second. And that glorious panorama from St. Rule's tower of the city spread out in moonlight eclipsed by dawn after the dance, and their London summer dawn of reconciliation—would either have been as enjoyable without contrast ? The Casino's feverish glitter made half the beauty of that still glory on moonlit mountain and tranquil sea at Monte Carlo. Were not beauty and enjoyment relative, not absolute, change and movement essential to pleasurable life ?

Bassett was at this time a hedonist ; enjoyment was more necessary to him than air, and it came to him in lavish profusion every hour of his life ; even the distastefulness of his work was but a tonic to give zest to pleasure. Unlike most happy creatures, he knew that he was happy and was thankful and humble, but he also knew that he could not bear suffering, either his own or other people's. Sensuous to a degree, he was no sensualist. He was too

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finely organized and too well balanced for gross or vicious pleasures ; intellect, imagination, and emotion interpenetrated and etherealized this sensuousness to the passion for beauty and perfection, that marks the poetic and artistic temperament, and is that half of Matthew Arnold's culture that he calls sweetness, a thing that rarely exists without some small degree of the other half—the love of light. Poverty, denying light, seemed an insuperable barrier to sweetness. Wealth seemed necessary to the enjoyment of beauty, and a certain measure of knowledge. Leisure and acquaintance with art and beautiful material surroundings, suavity of manners, and grace of intercourse, all were impossible without some degree of wealth.

The poor may have happy moments, he granted, but at the best their lives must be fragmentary and their natures incomplete.

"The power of æsthetic enjoyment," Grimsby maintained, "is more a matter of temperament than of training. There's no Philistine like a cultivated Philistine, just as there's no fool like a travelled one, and no rudeness to equal a duchess's. You can't cobble a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"No ; but pig-skin purses are handier and quite as handsome."

Bassett went home to his beautifully arranged and luxurious chambers, thankful that he was not as other men, born to ugliness and ignorance, of narrow circumstances, or even as this struggling law student. Poverty was cramping and fettering, poverty could not give, it had no power. Lighting one last cigar, he began dreaming of what money could do—found institutions and asylums, augment charities, build hospitals, churches, colleges, endow art, science, and literature, help lame dogs over stiles, soften manners, cultivate intellects. What could it not do ?

Wealth meant freedom, power, influence, all the graces

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and refinements of life. What happiness to be able to give his wife a beautiful home, to set her beauty in a fitting frame, with all the pleasures of intellect and all the enjoyments of social life at command. Would even Grimsby ask a wife to share half a crown's worth of opera? Grimsby would probably not dream of marriage till he was bald and a bore; and Airedale, with all the prestige of his name and his long descent, dared not marry without money. People talked of Rachel Hildenheim, whose full lips and heavily-lidded, sultry eyes proclaimed an even longer descent than his. Airedale had to pass by the woman he loved and always would love in a silence so deep and bitter that it told the tale it tried to conceal. There were two lives spoilt, and every one knew that Blanche nearly died of it a year ago. Tomorrow he was to take Isobel to look over the little house, their future home, in Berkeley Square, already so full of exquisite things that it was hard to find anything rare or costly or beautiful enough to add to its treasures.

Clasping his hands behind his head with a long, luxurious sigh of content, he looked up at a picture on the wall, a reproduction of Marshland's famous painting, now at a loan collection.

No wonder the young man with the lovable face "went away grieved." To sell all and give to the poor, and pauperize a whole district probably, surely that was too much to ask. Impious, presumptuous thought! What unknown chain of circumstance may have made that sweeping renunciation necessary? But it was a test before which flesh and blood might well falter. He "went away grieved"; how well Marshland had caught the grief and disappointment on the young and gracious and enthusiastic face, that saw an earth too sweet to be exchanged for Heaven. The artist had caught something too of a diviner disappointment and a nobler grief on the face that no man had ever had power to paint—except in occasional hints and shadowy suggestions. Was that

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stern command ever given now? Tolstoi thought so, and many another. And if Tolstoi juggled with his conscience and kept back an Ananias portion, who would dare cast a stone? The unfinished cigar fell from his hand; he sat still, absorbed in thought, while the chimes told the quarters, and the deep and solemn voice of Big Ben spoke the hour. Then, with a face grave to sadness, he went to his rest, and the deep sweet sleep of youth.

A few days later Sir Daniel dined quietly at home, the only guests being Isobel and her father—Neville and Adrian dined at Carlton House Terrace too often to be called guests. Phyllis and Isobel had just left the room, and Sir Dan, with the look of relief and enjoyment fallen nature often wears after such an exodus, settled himself comfortably in his chair and lit a cigar, told Adrian to pass a fresh bottle, poured himself a bumper and emptied it at a gulp. “‘Who loves not wine, woman, and song,’” he quoted, “‘remains a fool his whole life long.’ The good Luther was a man and a wise one. It *was* Luther, wasn’t it, Adrian? Come, lad, fill your glass and learn to take your wine as a man should.”

“Not every man has your steady brain, uncle,” Neville said, covering his glass with his hand. “In these days there are no giants as in the great days of old.”

“I’m a fairly seasoned vessel,” Sir Daniel admitted, with large joviality, and poured himself another glass, “though I touched nothing but water till I was thirty. Come, Kilmeny, *trink auf*; it wouldn’t hurt a lamb.”

Kilmeny refused with a gesture, and sipped at his half-finished glass. He said that such noble wine was worth dallying with, not to miss the mellow softness and delicate ethers.

“I’m afraid,” he added, “I am neither a son of Anak nor a baa-lamb, but only a dyspeptic old foggy, horribly conscious of a liver. But then I didn’t follow your good example in my twenties, Bassett. We can’t have it both ways.”

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"By George, no!" cried Sir Dan heartily; "I shouldn't enjoy life half as much as I do in my old age, but for the hard times I had as a lad. So you went the pace in the twenties, Kilmeny, eh? Were a sad dog, eh?"

"More glad than sad. Very fine cigar, this, soft and full. Thanks, I have a light. The old story, *Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait*, reversed in your case."

"Oh, I knew a thing or two when I was young," said the good Sir Dan, whose simple soul, unperplexed by the shattering criticism of modern German research, unreservedly accepted the Psalmist's assertion that wine maketh glad the heart of man, and cheerfully acted upon it as often as convenient.

He was now vividly illustrating this text and, as usual, inclined to take mankind into his confidence. This state of things never failed to disquiet Adrian, though he had never seen or heard of his father being actually overcome by wine.

"You had to get up pretty early in the morning to get ahead of young Dan Bassett, I promise you. They are fairly smart in the States, but there was a Britisher among them thirty or forty years ago who banged 'em all for smartness."

"That was where you began to make your pile," Neville asked, slowly sending a fragrant blue spiral towards the ceiling, "wasn't it?"

"Ay, the Yanks taught me how to make things hum, I guess." Then came anecdotes of sharp dealing in the States, of his own poverty and struggles and achievements, such as he loved to tell under the glad-hearted, genial sway of wine, and then the coarser, meaner elements in him came out, and the egoism, which careful habit and his own acquired sense of fitness kept in due subjection in calmer moods, sprang up and broke all bounds.

Adrian loved his father; he could not bear to see him like this, especially before others less familiar with his finer moods and unable to set them to his credit. Kil-

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meny turned from the old man and tried to set up a commonplace chat with the young one, whose attention was too much distracted for anything, while Neville, as usual, seemed to find a languid amusement in playing up to Sir Dan's weaknesses and leading him on by hints, questions, or suggestions, from story to story of his own smartness and successful spoiling of the Egyptians.

Adrian fidgeted, looked wretched, tried to beguile his father to other subjects, gave up in despair, and caught at Lord Kilmeny's proffered chit-chat, with one ear open to the veteran's reminiscences.

"And that," he heard presently in his father's resonant tones, "was the foundation of my pile."

"Father," he cried, startled out of himself, "but your advertisement was false. Oh!" he added, with an uncomfortable laugh, "you had me completely, you are only guying us."

"I'll be damned if I am!" shouted Sir Dan, banging his fist on the table.

"But it was downright cheating!" burst from Adrian.

Then came silence. Kilmeny looked grave; Adrian quivered; Neville's features were still and inscrutable; Sir Dan's deep eyes flamed and the veins on his temples stood out.

"You're a downright young ass!" he cried; "the thing is done every day in the States."

Adrian crimsoned, and his eyes had answering flames; he sprang up and faced his father, stammering and half suffocated with rage.

"Adrian," said Kilmeny then, looking at his watch and speaking in a cool but imperative voice, "I wish you would run upstairs and ask Isobel if she means me to take her to Covent Garden to-night. Time to be going, tell her."

He replaced his watch with deliberate care, while Adrian, still facing his father and standing just as he had sprung to his feet, made one more gasping attempt

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to speak, closed his lips with sudden pallor, and, looking from Sir Dan's passion-purpled face to the calm gravity of Kilmeny's, turned and left the room. Neville, unperturbed and apparently uninterested, was watching a blue smoke-spiral rise and uncurl by the ceiling.

"Young blackguard!" cried Sir Dan, who had also been suffocating for want of words to fit his fury, "to be called a cheat, a downright cheat, at my own table, by my own son. Did ye hear it, Kilmeny?"

"The expression," Kilmeny replied, with the same quiet gravity, "was somewhat strong."

"It's not as if it had been a really shady thing," Sir Dan added plaintively; "but I can never make that priggish young idiot understand that business is business." As he spoke he looked with furtive interrogation at Lord Kilmeny, whose gravely impassive gaze was directed to a bowl of roses on the table.

"Misunderstandings," observed Kilmeny, conscious of the interrogative gaze which he so carefully avoided, "are at times inevitable."

"The deuce they are! When a priggish young jackanapes, who knows nothing but book-learning and is choke-full of fads and highfalutin notions picked up at that infernal college, where he'd better have spent his time enjoying himself like a man, takes upon himself to call his father a downright cheat."

"Was the misunderstanding on one side only?" Lord Kilmeny asked gently.

"I wish to Heaven he'd been in a faster set," continued Sir Daniel. "That boy is much too good for this world; he'll never get through the rough and tumble of it. And what in creation do they go to public schools and universities for but to learn how to get through the world? I say, Kilmeny, has your boy taken all these tall notions and fine-drawn scruples about honour and obligation and mutual service from his college? They say it's a kind of measles breaking out in the universities nowadays!"

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"So one hopes," replied Kilmeny, very tranquilly laying down his smoked-out cigar. "Lismore is at Cambridge."

"What," stammered Sir Daniel, "what the deuce do you mean?"

"My daughter is merciful," said Kilmeny, with calm suavity; "evidently she is not going to drag me to the opera to-night. I hear Mrs. Thornton singing. What charm in her voice! Her style so simple, yet with so much restraint."

"Oh, confound her style!" roared Sir Dan. "What do you mean, I say?"

"The air is somewhat sultry," Lord Kilmeny returned, with an indignant glance at the impassive Neville; "your nephew seems a little overcome—inclined to faint——"

"Not at all, not in the least," returned Neville briskly. "I was listening to Phyllis. But the evening is inclined to be thundery; I am sure Lord Kilmeny would be cooler—we might find some iced coffee in the drawing-room."

"Iced devils!" muttered Sir Dan, sulkily giving way to the suggestion.

The drawing-room was all shadow, with little isles of soft light from shaded electric lamps. Even the piano, where Mrs. Thornton sat singing, was dim in dusk, the light of its lamps concentrated on the desk and the keys over which Phyllis's hands fluttered white and spirit-like, her face and figure wrapped in shadow. But for the fluttering hands and the singing voice, the room seemed empty when they came in.

"Isobel," called her father softly, looking round as the song broke off at their entrance; and a shadowy whiteness came from behind some palms banked round by growing Malmaison carnations, tea-roses, and mignonette, and glided into the light somebody had turned on.

"Here, daddy, neither lost nor gone before," replied a cheerful voice. "Are not these half-lights cool and restful, Sir Dan? I know no rooms in all London so

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capable of poetry as these. How did you do it? Did you suborn some magician to wave his wand over them?" she asked, laying two pretty white hands on the old man's shoulders and smiling caressingly up in his face.

The thunder began to clear away from the square brow, and the deep-set eyes lost their fierce brilliance. "Ready cash," he growled, "ready cash is the only magician I know."

"But your wizard, Cash, would be nothing without his witch-wife, Taste, and your taste is so perfect," was the honeyed rejoinder that further smoothed Sir Dan's ruffled spirit. "When are you coming round to advise us how to do up our little cabin?"

"Oh! that cabin of yours!" he grumbled, pretending to shake himself from her hands; "a pretty penny that'll cost by the time you've done."

"So we naturally hope, and a pretty result there ought to be. I couldn't breathe in an ugly house, Sir Dan. I should be perpetually out of temper and boxing my husband's ears all day long."

"And serve him right too. Where's Adrian?"

"Where's Adrian?" Isobel echoed, turning an artistically innocent face to Phyllis, who knew that he had been sitting with her under the palms when the others came in. But Adrian was nowhere discoverable, and iced coffee and a turn of talk put him out of Sir Dan's mind.

He was seen no more at Carlton Terrace that night; the next day was a full one for Sir Dan, and by the next he had forgotten the incident.

As soon as opportunity offered, that is, on the same night in his chambers, when Neville looked in to smoke a last cigar, Adrian asked him what he made of the American anecdote.

"Did I misunderstand him? Are such things actually done, or was he really jesting, after all?"

"Who knows?" returned Neville, with his usual bored

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indifference. "Who cares what an old man babbles in his cups?"

"That expression, Neville, is astonishingly unsuitable. In his cups? babbles?"

"Why be so infernally pedantic?"

"Oh, if common decency is pedantic! What do you mean by in his cups?"

"Not *in vino veritas*, if you must be so precise. Uncle Dan could bear his part in a computation of Scandinavian gods, and floor the lot. But wine loosens tongues and lightens hearts; we don't polish our phrases and cut our words to measure after dinner. Besides, he always likes to pile it on."

Adrian caught at that; the strictest observance of the fifth commandment could blind no one to Sir Dan's inclination to bounce over youthful achievements; so he pillowed his anxiety upon this and slept on the consoling thought that the transaction, though shady, was probably greatly exaggerated. But this was only the beginning of troubles, and he knew too well what Lord Kilmeny thought, though no word upon the subject ever passed between them.

Kilmeny went home in an unusually thoughtful mood, wishing that the marriage had already taken place, wishing it had never been arranged, and collecting from his memory various scattered hints caught from time to time as to the manner in which the Bassett pile had been made. But they were only hints; there was nothing definite enough to lay hold of; people are so ready to detract from the merits of success. Happy, thrice happy, is the man who is the mark of calumny!

CHAPTER III

ISOBEL AND BLANCHE

ISOBEL sometimes envied Blanche her life of quiet activity, in the world but out of its pomp and glare, in the thick of its movements but out of its aimless, wearying excitements ; again, she sometimes wondered at her self-denying choice. Blanche had done more than well at the University ; she had come out first in greats, distancing even those dominant males. The natural sequence of such distinction, it seemed to Isobel, would be a post at a woman's university, or a life devoted to literature and scholarship, if not the usual life of her class, largely spaced with leisure for intellectual pursuits.

But in face of much opposition and good advice Blanche had chosen to bury herself in the social settlement of her college in East London, in conjunction with, and complementary to, a male settlement from the University.

"To burrow in dirty slums and give up the fruit of all your studious, sacrificed youth," Isobel grumbled one day ; "to be a sort of secular district visitor for life. Better be a nun."

Blanche smiled pensively, took another cigarette, and observed that she had no vocation for a conventual life.

"You'll dwindle into a sort of inferior stage 'Arriet," Isobel said. "Already you care to talk of nothing that doesn't interest a coster ; you are getting the cockney twang ; your very slang is East End."

"No, no ; I admit the coster and the twang, but some

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accusations are beyond even Christian forgiveness. The very essence of slang is evanescence and exclusiveness."

"And inappropriateness."

"Of course, slang is metaphor without analogy; the more remote and unmeaning the figure of speech, the more successful the slang."

"You don't consider the mortification of being cousin to a woman of one idcar, who owns a little dorg without a tile and tells it to garn when it fights in the street. I doubt if there is any swear language or thieves' patter you couldn't pass an exam. in, Blanche."

"I ought to by this time. I know several burglars—such clever fellows, Belle, and so amusing—down White-chapel way."

"Break off in time, Blanchie. Now why on earth should you hide yourself in all this squalor?"

"For nothing on earth. Belle, dear, couldn't you come out to our soirée on Saturday? Last time the girls said that only to look at you and your frock and your pearls made them feel comfortable and quiet like inside. One declared it was better than a funeral; she didn't suppose the angels had nicer hair or sweeter smiles."

"Dear Blanche, no mortal could live up to anything so tall for half an hour on end."

"And bring a song or two and a guitar, there's a dear. Then if you could, if you only could, bring some fencing foils to our gym. one evening and put the factory girls through a few passes. No, I know you can't spare two evenings, so come Saturday afternoon."

"Well! Why not? And teach them how to do a court curtsy without tumbling over their trains. I'm not laughing at your 'Arriets, darling. I only wish I had the good enough heart in me to do what you are doing. But I have no genius for doing unpleasant things. I do know how to enjoy life—my worst enemies can't deny that. But you are like that great wise Princess of Tennyson's, only much nicer and gentler. And both you

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and Adrian nearly died of those horrid, stuffy, smelly slums. And in the same year. You began at St. Andrews."

"Began dying? My dear, I did that the day I was born. One must live somewhere—why not in East London?"

"Don't you know that Airedale is dying of love for you, Blanche?"

"Dying must be a very healthy amusement, then; it seems to agree uncommonly well with him. Belle, don't you know that Airedale has too much sense to die before the proper time?"

"I should so love to see you married to Jim."

"Then you would love a very stupid thing. How could he marry a woman without a penny to her name?"

"It seems so hard that two lives should be spoilt for want of a few pence," Isobel said plaintively, and Blanche laughed aloud.

"I can't understand you," Isobel added; "sometimes you seem quite heartless and worldly. It's not as if you were me, full of plans and ambition and *joie de vivre*, and wanted to play a great part in the world."

"But do you want to play a great part, Belle? How do you propose to do it?"

"Why not revive the political salon? Women are made for affairs; they should influence them. Adrian has more talent for public life than people suspect. Just now he is hampered by that old man's obstinacy. It is his prentice time—commerce, finance, and business habits are all necessary to a public man. There is the making of a statesman in him. By and by—well, you will see—by and by."

"Yes," Blanche said very slowly, "I have always thought that of him. There is great power, quite unsuspected power, there. He disappointed people at Oxford, it is true, but that is quite in the rule. Great men are always disappointments at universities; they often do

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well there, but seldom best, if only because they raise expectations they are too immature to fulfil. Fine minds mature slowly. Those who play a part in the world are too many-sided to concentrate themselves on special subjects early in life. They must cast about and learn and try many things before they find themselves and know what they can do. He is a dreamer, yes ; but one of those who make their dreams come true."

"Blanche ! I believe you are the only creature on earth who understands him, except me."

A great crimson wave rushed over the clear pallor of Blanche's face and left it paler, a flame leapt from the depth of her still, dark eyes and vanished.

"His character always interested me," she replied, "apart from his—connexion with you—and Airedale. But, Belle dear, I never cease to wonder at your choice. I never know what secret affinities draw you together. Your characters, your aims—of course, I may be wrong—seem to me so—so opposite."

"You dear, sweet, wise owl ! That's just it. We *are* opposite, complementary to each other. He really is almost too good for daily consumption, so my native devilry and double allowance of original sin come in as a corrective. He is unworldly, and in love with ideas and great thoughts, while I'm not above the pomps and vanities of this wicked, delightful world. My worldliness will give him a firm footing on solid earth and keep him from flying off into cloudland. I shall be the practical member of the firm. He is docile and gentle ; driven with a light curb and occasionally allowed his head, you could do anything with him."

"But will he be content to be the junior partner ?"

"Not if he's labelled, of course. There the art comes in. These male creatures are so simple in their subtlety ; the way to lead a man is to seem to follow him."

They were sitting in a shaded room looking west and pierced here and there with rods and arrows of vivid

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sunlight, through chinks and interstices of blinds. Roses in their dresses, roses in bowls about the artificial dusk of the room, roses mixed with mignonette and carnations and lilies growing in jardinières, scented the air that came freely from the open windows and doors of the house in Grosvenor Square, and overpowered the lingering fragrance of tea and delicate cigarettes. Isobel lay with idle grace in a long cane chair, her hands clasped behind her head, her feet lightly crossed. Blanche gave her a long, long look, while Isobel gazed musingly at some cupids floating among rose-garlands on the ceiling and listened to the hammer-taps of hoofs on the road, which with the continuous rat-tat of door-knockers and rarer shrilling of cab-whistles, wove a thin familiar melody upon the general murmur and hum of West London. Lady Bidy burst into the room, looking for something she could not find, and burst out again with a question there was no time to answer; an opening door let out the distant sound of Patricia's voice singing.

In her long look Blanche saw how finely her cousin had developed during the last two years; her raised arms showed the beautiful contours of her bust and waist, and the long, lithe slope from hip to ankle; power and grace and latent vitality were in every exquisite line of her resting body; a fluttering sunbeam played in her sunny hair; her broad hat, a perfect finish to a perfect costume, lay on a chair near; a smile, happy with exultant, almost insolent, happiness, as of one who had the world at her feet, was on her full red lips—sweet and kind lips, sunny and glad, yet firm and capable—capable of what? Blanche wondered. Here were certainly all the externals of a queen of society and ruler of men's hearts and minds; here was power such as no man can possess, power to blight masculine natures and crush male hearts to dust, power to bless and soothe, stimulate and calm, elevate and direct, power truly awful, a crown of nature's own forging, such as women who sit upon

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thrones, sceptred and anointed, cannot wear except by special grace of nature. No wonder that Isobel's progress through life was marked by the hearts she left broken and sighing behind her. Brilliant matches might have been hers during those two years; many a gallant fellow had been dismissed with a smile and a jest, many a one was ready to come back at the lifting of a finger or flash of an eye. Yet she had been bound only by her own wishes, and during a year's virtual separation she had been true to her first choice, and he had done nothing, and had nothing but the promise of youth and the charm of romantic devotion and—wealth—to recommend him.

Suddenly Blanche seemed to catch the secret. Isobel was fully alive to the value of externals; she knew how to measure worldly advantages better than many a woman of the world twice her age; she was what is commonly called clever; those lovely blue eyes, to which men's hearts were wax in flame, were wide open and clear sighted; she had very accurately measured the capacity and social value of the man who loved her, and quite dispassionately analysed his character and perceived its adaptability to her purposes, and built the plan of her life upon these cool and calm deductions.

Blanche was appalled. She dissected and spoke of her betrothed husband as she would have dissected and spoken of any man whose features were in Punch's cartoons and whose name was the sport of the mob. She was twenty-two, he was twenty-four; she was proposing, in current slang, to marry him and run him for all he was worth. At least, so it appeared to the shocked perceptions of Blanche, in the long look she bestowed upon the beautiful and vividly happy face idly looking at the cupids on the ceiling, in a pleasant sort of dream, from a pose of restful grace among flowers in the cool and shadowed room.

"Isobel," Blanche asked presently, in a deep, moved

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voice, "do you consider what it means to marry this man?"

"Good Heavens!" she cried, with a little start and an alert change of posture, "you take one's breath away. You talk just like a walking marriage service—bound in pearl-grey *crêpe de chine*, with red roses in its belt."

"But do you," persisted Blanche, presenting an unchanging gravity to the other's light ripple of laughter, "do you, can you—really—love him?"

"My dear!" cried Isobel, gathering herself up slowly from the depth of her long chair, "do they keep cold clergyman and iced judge on the sideboard in that heathen settlement of yours? Or did you lunch on stewed owls, to be so solemn? Don't be intense, duckie; it's Mid-Victorian."

"Ah! but *do* you?" asked Blanche, with undaunted fervour.

Isobel rose and crossed to the deep sofa on which Blanche sat, inappropriately erect in her fervour, and sank on her knees beside her, opening her arms in tempestuous, half-childish affection.

"You dear," she said, with a great kiss and a small laugh. Then she took the roses from her belt and dashed them in Blanche's face and stood up, a flash going over her features. "What is love?" she asked, "the thing we all make such a fuss about and so rarely feel, and what does it matter, after all? Is it just this—being lifted up into another world and breathing purer air and thinking better thoughts? Or is it a strange, sweet sort of pain, that is only still when some one—only one—person is near? Or is it to see everything in a fresh light, a sort of fairy glamour that turns common things and hard things to magic splendour and beauty? or is it to be happier than you can bear, or to feel there is nothing you cannot bear for one sake? Is it a great vague, sweet terror, a wild and yet delightful unrest? Is it to feel your heart beat thick and quick at the sound

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of a voice or a step, a name almost, to feel safe, quite safe and sheltered, near one and happy at the very thought of him? Or is it to hate one's own petty and frivolous self and want to be better for his sake? "Is that what you call love?"

Her cheek flushed vivid rose, the quick rise and fall of her beautiful breast fluttered her laces, the flute sweetness of her voice deepened and thrilled, her eyes were sapphire flame; all the lithe, tall grace of her grew vital with passion, full womanhood seemed come to sudden flower from her gay and graceful youth. Blanche had never seen anything so perfectly lovely and so perfectly alive.

"Or is it," Blanche added, her fascinated gaze still on Isobel's vivid face, "to lose self and be ready to bear and dare and do everything for one sake?"

"Unless the poets have been lying from the beginning of time," Isobel laughed, the flute note coming back and the tense quiver leaving her in graceful warm repose. "And that is what I feel—for this man. What? crying?" she added, with a sudden movement that brought her to the sofa, her hands on Blanche's shoulders and her eyes looking straight into the soft dark ones smiling through tears.

"I am glad; he is fortunate," Blanche said.

"Very fortunate," she repeated to herself later in the evening, when, after dining at Grosvenor Square, she sat with Isobel, Lady Kilmeny, and Lismore in their box at Covent Garden and the curtain ran down on the first act of *Tannhäuser*, and Adrian appeared at the door.

He looked not at all happy, but worn and worried; his eyes had the fatigued and drawn look of care, dissipation, or overwork. But when he saw Isobel, who turned at his entrance, an electric spark shot between them, and his face lit up suddenly, charged with a spiritual force that passed into Isobel's softened gaze. Yet they scarcely spoke, though he remained in the box for the rest of the evening; but Blanche was sure that each saw

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and heard everything through the medium of the other's personality. People came and went, Lady Kilmeny was much engrossed with an old friend known years ago in Vienna, Lismore had discovered friends elsewhere in the house, and Bassett found much to say to Blanche standing at her side and behind Isobel between the acts.

"One never sees you now—at least, not at frivolous functions like this," he said. "Have you left the settlement?"

"Only for one Cinderella peep at the world. My next frivolity will be your wedding."

"Could a wedding, by any stretch of imagination, be called *festal*, much less frivolous?"

"Let us hope Isobel is a little deaf. You never go east now. You are missed at the settlement, though you show that you remember them. That piano is a great joy; it must have cost money, as people say."

"It will stand a little wear. Now that I'm a City man there seems to be no time for the settlement. But we shall meet Saturday week, I hope; your father has asked me for the Sunday."

"I'm coming too," Isobel said, over her shoulder. and the lights went down and the curtain rose on the Hall of Song.

He never went to the settlement now, and the piano was an act of sudden penitence for his forgetfulness of what had become an unbearable pain. The Tannhäuser Overture typified the strife perpetually waging within him at this time; the shriek of the violin arpeggios clearly interpreted the dissonance in his heart. The Pilgrims' Chorus was strong and insistent, but not strong enough; and who could resist the magic of the Venusberg? The eternal strife between flesh and spirit was a losing battle. How gaily and gladly, with what joyous defiance, Tannhäuser sprang up, harp in hand, at the tournament of song and flung his challenge before them all, only to be scouted, cast out, and crushed

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by their scorn. Enjoyment is so imperative; was youth made for denial? Again the deep, insistent chords of the Pilgrims' Chorus, ever repressed, ever triumphantly resurgent; the bright and gallant knight is humbled, disrobed, and crushed by guilt that can never be forgiven, a pilgrim vainly penitent. But Elisabeth comes, with her love and sacrifice, and the passionate supplication of her great prayer ascends, and with the miracle of the blossoming rod the castaway is redeemed on her bier. And now at last the deep majestic chorus peals out the triumph of spirit over the seductions of the flesh.

"Yet Tannhäuser died," Isobel said, turning to Adrian, when the curtain fell; but he said nothing, only gave her a long, wistful look.

Ten days later these three were at Belminster, where Blanche was giving some factory girls a week-end's entertainment. As the Archdeacon said, to bring those half-tamed girls all the way from London to the historic city was no joke; but Isobel did her part in the transaction most gallantly and effectively.

The girls came by the afternoon express, brimming with animal spirits, exultant, exuberant as unbroken colts, and were promptly detrained into open brakes, which bore them, laughing and singing, through the ancient city to open downs, where they were shot, together with tea-baskets, on to the turf by a group of tall firs. There they boiled kettles, ate incredible masses of cake, and romped like children. Borne back into the dignified quietude of the Close when the great tower was stained in the after-rose of sunset, the exuberant spirits of these incongruous guests were somewhat quelled by the Archdeacon's stately presence; then, after a still more powerful refection than the first, they were sufficiently subdued to enjoy a variety entertainment in the house, in which Isobel and her guitar played a leading part. Adrian observed that Isobel accompanied the few who went to

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church before breakfast, and those who went to morning and evening prayer in the cathedral, and also helped marshal the troop round cathedral and Close and ancient churches between the services. For this sight-seeing Adrian and Reggie Ingram were guides. And when a sumptuous tea had been taken in the Archdeacon's sunny, walled garden, it was Isobel who sat with her guitar on a window-sill, framed in rose and honeysuckle, and sang "Angels ever bright and fair" with such taste and feeling that some of the girls cried aloud, and all were tamed to unusual quiet. Isobel, singing of angels among roses, with sunbeams touching her angel-coloured hair, made a sweet picture for remembrance, with another of her white-clad figure and delicate face outlined on a massive cathedral pier at prayer.

"How many girls, especially how many Mostyns, would give up two whole days in the very height of a brilliant season to amuse a handful of work-girls?" Mrs. Ingram asked in her shaded corner of the garden, where Adrian brought her strawberries. "It is not as if it were her life, as with Blanche. Isobel is so popular, so much sought after. I call that real goodness, Adrian, and I do think you are a very lucky boy."

He was quite sure of it, and for a time it seemed as if the deep, insistent chords of the Pilgrims' Chorus must triumph over the shrieking dissonance of insurgent sense.

CHAPTER IV

STEVENSON'S UNIVERSAL

ON that same afternoon, one of the Carlton House Terrace Sundays, that Mrs. Thornton had made so popular, was drawing to a close, and even the rooms devoted to bridge were beginning to thin. The beautifully shaded house was cooler than ever and empty of all but intimate friends. Among these was Airedale; he was, as usual, anxiously shepherding his mother, who had nevertheless contrived to give him the slip and escape to the green tables, from the fascination of which nothing could tear her. He was offering Phyllis ices in a thorough draught by an open window, as the only reasonable thing to do with the thermometer at ninety in the shade, and Muriel, leaning against her mother with a wistful eye upon the ice-plates, was asking the earliest age at which people might eat ices.

"That one's much too hard for me. Ask a bigger boy," he said. "Uncle Neville—Cousin Adrian."

"But Cousin Adrian doesn't never come now," she said.

"No, we never see him in these days. I wonder why?" Phyllis asked.

"He's always at loggerheads with my uncle," said Neville, who was leaning against a pillar near. "He's such a thundering prig—that's what rubs the old man up the wrong way."

"He isn't; it's a story," shouted Muriel. "Mother, what is a prig?" she whispered.

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"Why do you call your cousin a prig, Bassett?" Airedale asked.

"Surely you ought to know; isn't he a little too impossibly blameless?"

"He's a better fellow than most, no doubt. Give a dog a bad name and hang him. But he may not be guilty of all the virtues you impute to him."

"Perhaps not," Neville said, with a nasty smile.

"Oh!" said Airedale, with irritation, "if you falsely accuse a man of forgery, he can clear himself; but if you call him a prig, he's done for."

"Adrian must be jolly well wiped out by this time then," Neville supposed.

"Are prigs popular? Do they inspire strong friendships, as your cousin does? By George! Bassett, don't you know that a thoroughly vicious man can be the beastliest prig on earth?"

"Surely," he returned, with a shrug; "but when a man informs you he is spotless—well, you know what to think."

"You know very well that he is lying," retorted Airedale. "Mrs. Thornton, mayn't I get you some iced coffee? You look fagged to death."

"I was just thinking I would look in at the bridge tables. You are dining with us to-night, Neville, remember."

"I can't think why my brother and Adrian are so antipathetic," she said to Airedale when they were moving away. "It is a pity, as they are always coming in contact in business."

"It'll wear off in time very likely. Your brother thinks it his duty to lick Adrian into shape, and Adrian thinks it his to kick out at him. They'll soon find their level and hate each other like average Christian relations."

"Do you know, Bass," said Airedale that evening, when he happened to be dining alone with him, "that

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your sardonic kinsman thoroughly disapproves of all your virtues ? ”

“Neville ? I know that he hates me like the deuce. And I don't exactly adore him.”

“Well, if you are wise, you won't make an enemy of him. There's a nasty look in that chap's eye at times—like a vicious horse's before the ears go back and the teeth show.”

“Poor old chap, he isn't as bad as all that ; 'tis the manner that grates. Something must have soured him. He has no *joie de vivre*. Perhaps it is Phyllis's fiasco. He had a hand in bringing that marriage about.”

“Profit by the wisdom of the aged, Bass. Don't make an enemy of that chap. I say, what's come to you of late ? You are always a cup too low.”

“Commerce, Jim, commerce—the dullness of the respectable grocer who sands the sugar and waters the treacle before he calls his family to prayers. Strictly speaking, I am a grocer, a grocer's apprentice, that is.”

“And you don't like figs ? ” Airedale asked, busy with the plate before him, “or prayers ? ”

“It isn't the figs, it's having to sand the sugar. There's the rub. Neville swears it's the custom of the trade.”

“That's why he calls you a prig. A thundering shame. A prig is a creature of aggressive, as well as excessive, virtue.”

“Who knows ? Or simply a bore—or a chap who likes what you hate ? Perhaps Neville's right after all.”

“Virtue to be truly aggressive must preach. I say, old chap, if you lay down the law to your governor and Neville—about figs—you must expect them to lay their ears back and call you a prig.”

“Oh ! let them call me what they like, Jim. But—it's hard luck to have to go against the dear old man.”

“The prodigal parent is among the problems of the age,” Airedale conceded, a vivid picture of Lady Somersby at bridge rising before him. “Why not chuck the grocery ?

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—that is, if you can't swallow the sand. My chief has his eye upon you. He's looking out for a smart youth to train up for the Westminster Mill, and he's heard of your Union renown. His son was a freshman in our last year. Now that is what you are fit for. You'll have the Mostyn influence and Sir Dan's prestige, and—well—any amount of backing up—I know what you hanker after. You have wealth, you marry rank—why sell figs ? ”

“Because Stevenson's Universal Providing is the darling of the old man's heart, and it isn't half developed yet. Heaven only knows what it isn't to do when it is—all sorts of political things. And his only son must be in it and carry it on after him.”

“Not developed ? Where can you go to escape it—from the Tweed to Land's End ? Why there isn't a town of any size—and certainly no pleasure resort—where you don't see a branch of Stevenson's on your way to your hotel.”

“Oh ! it's to be imperial ; these islands are too small for it. The organization is really admirable—one plan throughout and amazingly simple, like the mainspring of a watch—and all his own creation. He is the kind of man to draw up a political constitution or a judicial code. People don't want new constitutions or freshly codified laws once a week, and they do want cheese and bacon. Why Stevenson ? In compliment to his father. It grieves him that his father—Steven Bassett—went down in the struggle before he could rise above mere bread earning. So this business is to be known as the work, not so much of Daniel Bassett, as of Steven's son.”

“Well, young un, I'm afraid you must swallow the sand then,” Airedale said. “And after all, you are a lucky chap. You are going to marry one of the handsomest and most charming women in England. How many men has she refused for you ? Do you know that

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Aynesworth has been after her? Addie, all women love strawberry leaves. While I—well, I'd stand behind a counter with an apron on and sell—anything clean—to be able to marry—my own choice. And I've got to marry somebody. Sometimes I'm tempted to ask *her*, just to see if she cares. It's irrational, but if I thought she did care for me, I could better make a duty match—as I must—sooner or later."

"She is still unmarried, still to win, and never a rumour of any other man? Ask her, Jim, ask her."

"No, I've no right to break into her life and trouble her peace; she has never given me the faintest sign of anything beyond—friendship. My lines are laid clear. We are encumbered—incredibly. Well! those two women are about as good as they make 'em, Bassie, and they deserve to be happy. How fagged they looked at Waterloo to-night! When you come to think of it, Isobel is lucky too; for she *must* marry money and she gets love with it."

"Why must she? She is not heir to an old title and encumbered estates."

"She is born *grande dame*; made for a brilliant position. Her character is complex and undeveloped. She wants a spacious life—such as your wife will command—she couldn't do in a narrow range or without power."

"Do you think that?" he asked rather sadly; then he looked long and musingly at a cigar he held unsmoked in his fingers, and then at a spray of myrtle in his coat. "Ah! you don't know—Isobel," he said, dwelling fondly on the name.

"I've seen her in her cradle, and played with her in short frocks. A wild, long-limbed slip of a thing, up to everything, with a finger in every scrape and afraid of nothing. *Joie de vivre* there, if you like. I ought to know Belle."

"It isn't Stevenson's—it's not figs," Airedale mused afterwards. "There's something—he can't or won't tell."

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He looks as if he'd been going the pace. You never can tell. He's human, quite as human as the rest of us. Poor, dear, splendid old Bass."

Adrian dined at Carlton Terrace the next day, certain of finding Sir Dan at home and alone. They talked of the probable change in the Ministry, of foreign news, of closing quotations on 'Change, even of the weather, and admired the silver bowls of roses from the Towers. Phyllis was kept long at dessert; and when at last she was allowed to go, Sir Daniel ordered coffee in his den; he had papers to look over before going to the House.

"I came on purpose for a word alone with you," Adrian said.

"Sorry. I ought to have dined and gone to the House an hour ago."

Adrian went disappointed to the drawing-room, and played absently with Muriel, and lingered aimlessly till her carriage came for Phyllis.

"Surely you are going to Midshire House. Come with me," Phyllis said. But she was allowed to go alone.

Having put her into the carriage, he stood undecided on the pavement till she was out of sight. The glimmering dusk—all the night there would be in the summer sky—was already pierced by rays of electricity and points of gas. He looked at his watch and walked slowly away till an empty hansom coming along decided him.

"Where to?" the driver asked through the trap-door.

"To Grosvenor Square, forty-five," he called, and they drove smartly off till the apparition of crimson lamps low in the roadway stopped them.

That road was always up and always just in this spot. In his impatience he was on the point of jumping out and taking a cab beyond the block, when the policeman's arm fell to his side and the traffic rolled on.

A brougham with the Mostyn liveries was drawn up before the door of No. 45; he was but just in time.

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"Who are going out?" he asked the man who admitted him and took him to a room near the entrance.

"Her Ladyship and Lady Isobel," he heard.

Some seconds passed; the horses clanked their bits and pawed the road with an impatience less than his own. He heard voices from within, feminine, high-pitched; a loud, prolonged, defiant shriek of laughter, low voices in remonstrance, and the sharp shutting of a door. The men in the hall were whispering together, the footman standing on the steps with a rug on his arm said something to the coachman, who shook his head and looked anxiously at the house while he drew his whip over the off-horse's shining flank. Before long there was a quick rustle of silk down the stairs and through the hall, and Isobel came into the half-lighted room, beautifully dressed but with no coat or wrap, and trying to put a long strand of hair shaken loose on her shoulder back in its place. A strip of torn lace disfigured the dress. With a quick throb of pity he knew what it all meant before she spoke.

"Dearest," she said in a voice that went to his heart, "I am so sorry. I must send you away. We are due at Midshire House to-night. Mother *must* go, and poor Biddy insists on going too and is not fit, so I must stay at home with her. Good night."

One quick kiss and hand-clasp and she was gone, but not before he saw the last of a shower of tears on her eyelashes and a very sad and wearied look on her face.

In the hall he met Lady Kilmeny rustling slowly with a calm and collected face towards the door; she gave him a friendly nod and smile of welcome.

"Kilmeny is at the House," she said, taking his arm, "and Belle doesn't care to leave her sister, who is not very well. This horrid hysteria! Girls try to do too much in these days; these athletics are the greatest mistake—in the height of a crowded season, at all events. So I am all alone—unless you can drive a little way with

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me," she added, with a wistfulness that made him say he was just going to ask for a lift.

All the arts of the toilet were in vain to-night to clear the weight of years and trouble from poor Jessie Kilmeny's face: the hair was of the most becoming tint and artistic arrangement; the eyebrows' pencilling, the eyelids' darkening perfect, white and red in due proportion had been skilfully laid on carefully massaged features; light shot from a diamond tiara in the hair and glanced from diamond and sapphire on a plump neck where the evening coat opened—but it was a worn and weary and disheartened woman of advanced middle age who lay back silent, in the flashing and darkening lights in the luxurious carriage, her hand resting, as if for comfort and shelter, in his arm.

"I needn't ask if you heard," she said presently in a bitter tone. "Oh, Adrian, I don't know what to do sometimes. How thankful I shall be when Belle is safely married and out of it."

"Ought she to be exposed to this?" he asked; "surely not alone with Biddy?"

"Patterson, their maid, is with them. Patterson has the muscles of a prize-fighter, luckily. But we could hardly leave her to Patterson. One of us had to stay. And it is imperative that I should appear at Midshire House to-night, and desirable for me to go elsewhere. I must be looking ghastly, an absolute hag."

"Only a little tired. Everybody is tired by the end of June."

"All very well for girls. Fatigue refines young faces, but it marks *Anno Domini* in big type upon us."

"Upon some. The moment you speak you light up, and the weariness goes," he said, with amiable mendacity. "'*Pour être belle*,' you know the proverb?"

"You are a dear boy," she returned, with a smile that justified anything. The carriage stopped at the end of a long line marshalled by an autocratic policeman, and

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he took the opportunity to get out and say good night.

"What will she say when she knows?" he wondered, slipping through the crowd and walking away aimlessly yet with an observant eye.

The warm summer night was pleasant and fresh, almost cool after the long sunny day. The thing he had braced himself with so much effort to say was not to be said that night, either to Isobel or his father; it was both a disappointment and a reprieve. He was too restless and burdened in mind for any social function or amusement; air and motion were necessary, and the infinite and imperishable things suggested by the pale, silver-starred sky.

His steps led him along the Embankment, partly with some faint notion of catching Sir Daniel on his exit from the House. Few places are more impressive; he drew in the beauty and majesty of it with a long breath, almost a sob, and then slowly paced the bridge, whence the river was seen moving, like a living creature, resolutely, irresistibly, to its goal, and holding on its dark calm breast the image of all it passed, the lights of the reflected palace, and the bridge, and the boats, and the electric moons that silvered the foliage on the Embankment. How much the river has seen through all the fitful, fretful centuries; and how little it has deviated from its course. So it flowed on its placid way when wild fowl nested in its sedgy shores, and wild beasts and wilder men wandered by its waters, centuries before the Saxon king broke into the quiet islet by the ferry that was the main road to the north, and must have been crossed by many a band of Roman soldiers. It flowed on, as heedless of pilgrim and wayfarer and the ferryman who rowed St. Peter by night to the hallowing of the first minster, as of the crowds that hurry and jostle above it with continuous, confused noise to-day. It was the same before any of the kings and warriors, poets and

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statesmen, saints and sages, whose dust dwindles within the great grey minster, drew breath ; the same when its banks were still pleasant with wild growth and the precincts of the Abbey were sanctuary for hunted criminals ; the same when medieval pageant, plumed knight, and silk-suited lady passed along ; when civil tumult brawled upon its banks and the city east by the old Roman fortress reddened the tide with the flame of its own destruction ; and when it rose renewed from its ashes and the great dome soared into the misty sky. Its channel has deviated here and there, and here and there its over-brimming has swept meadow and marge bare, yet it is the same as in the beginning of Time—as measured by man.

The human flood that fills its basin for so many miles round has not been able to change the river. It has banked it with solid masonry and lined it with warehouse and wharf, with palace and pleasure-house ; it has swept it bare of greenery, and planted floating forests of masts from the ends of the earth upon its unconquered tide ; it has bridged it with massive highways, defiled and cleansed it, deepened its channel here and broadened it there ; it has torn the buried sunshine of a million years ago from the depths of the earth and snatched lightning from the clouds of heaven to make its nights a more brilliant day, and send upon millions of flying wheels restless, uncounted multitudes hither and thither round and across it—but the unchanged river flows resolutely on to its unchanging goal, as it flowed when the bronze Boadicea on the bridge was a living queen driving living coursers to war. Sunbeams dance in its ripple, stars and moon sway upon its breast, breezes darken its surface, and golden pageants of sunset glow in it as in the brave queen's forgotten days ; broad-winged sea-gulls hover and swoop above it, untroubled by the human racket and roar, as freely and joyously as the water-fowl in those lonely days before the ancient town by the Roman tower east grew and rolled in torrent of overflowing masonry

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over the minster city and the pleasant villages and fields round. It is as a symbol of the unchanging permanence of nature and God's work in face of the fitful and feverish activities of man, that the river is so healing and sweet to see, where it flows by the long and solemn mass and giant towers of the Palace at Westminster.

CHAPTER V

AT WESTMINSTER

IN the fresher air by the river the restless irritation of a troubled mind and divided will ebbed away. Adrian's pulse resumed its even beat, and he was able to consider the step he was about to take more calmly and impartially.

His lips still glowed with the touch of Isobel's, and his heart ached with the distress he had seen in her face. He knew that he loved her with a perfect and imperishable love, in which imagination and romance, body and soul, all had due part ; it was no mere ebullience of sense or intoxication of romantic fancy to fade at the first disillusion of everyday life. It began in a boy's poetic fancy and delight in a high type of beauty ; it had ripened to a deep and spiritual passion with slowly ripening manhood. He was sure that she loved him with profound half-conscious passion in the depths and heights of a pure and warm heart. But he was not sure that she would cleave to him through good and evil report, and this made him weak with fear.

The Palace glowed in slits and slabs and points of light throughout its dark mass, the lighted river broke gently round the great bridge and piers, and the weird picture of the passing crowd of shadowed and lighted faces gave place to a vision of Isobel among the roses, singing of angels scarcely more bright and fair than herself, in the sunny, walled garden under the cathedral towers.

Big Ben thundered out a sonorous ultimatum to his

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vassal chimes, and the quivering air eddied back into quiet. Adrian saw Isobel in rich attire, saw the satiny gleam of her beautiful neck and arms, the blue fire of her eyes, her bright lips brimming over with laughter and quick replies, as he had seen her on the night of the cotillon, as he had seen her a hundred times. Airedale was right ; she was made for a dazzling part in life. But—to lose Isobel.

He looked at the long, dark pile of the Palace. The House was sitting ; his father was there in his place. The glowing disk of the clock shone flower-like on its tall stem, lifted high out of the great city, and measuring out the days of empires, counting the pulse of national life and the heart-beats of mighty hopes, above the petty movements of individual lives swarming multitudinous below. That dark mass of masonry, brooding dreamlike above the river, symbolized the life he had hoped and trained for. To-night it seemed a very beautiful and satisfying life, thrilling with large excitement and imperial aims, alive with world-wide emotion and the passion of great thoughts.

He looked east to that floating forest by the ancient Tower, whither the wealth of the world was borne from every sea. What a power was in the vast commerce that drew the ends of the earth together, bringing nation in contact with nation, and weakening race antipathies, building up young commonwealths and fresh empires ; what industry and enterprise, what thought and imagination, what ingenuity, endurance, and courage went to the making of it. What vistas of romance and adventure it opened up, what a binding and civilizing influence it was, and how great its power of adding to the store of human knowledge. In that, too, he had hoped to bear a part, using it to serve man, not enslave him. How vast and innumerable were the possibilities of trade and how dreadful the actual net result of it. Millions of wheels were whizzing, millions of pistons beating, cranks turning,

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hammers throbbing, and coils unwinding, night and day and day and night, to the end that men might run aimlessly to and fro on the earth, skill and craftsmanship perish, labour lose joy and dignity, and congeries of mean and miserable dwellings swarm with dreary mechanical lives; that beauty might vanish and one half of civilized England be laid waste and the other forced into artificial productiveness and made to yield food from its ultimate grain of dust. Then the cruelties and horrors of crowded East London life rose up. That was industrialism, the offspring of monstrous, perverted commerce and mechanical invention.

All the beauty faded from the soft and balmy night, the stars darkened, the air teemed thick with spirits of evil, echoed with the laughter of unseen devils, hovering like vultures above the enormous maze of brick and stone. But doubtless some angels of light were there, armed and combatant, though often—to all appearance—worsted in the fight. Of what avail to turn out of the common way, to try to stem the irresistible torrent of wrong, tilting at monsters which to the common gaze are harmless necessary windmills? Why not give up the insoluble problem, accept the common verdict, the necessity of wrong, and go with the stream, trying not to be a greater beast than is inevitable? Who could do more? And then—how disappoint and grieve the kindest of fathers, the brave, strong, patient spirit that had done and suffered so much?

But the Voice that Tolstoi heard and half heeded—surely that Voice had spoken and with no uncertain sound? How should a thing of an hour, a creature of infinite needs and imperious instincts, make any fit response to so tremendous a call?

Some stars had set and the tide, which had been at full flood, was beginning to turn. He stopped on the bridge, watching the water eddy round the piers, until a heavy hand descended upon his shoulder and a deep

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voice shouted "Hullo!" and the friendly face of Grimsby showed above the red glow of a short pipe.

"You've no sense of the fitness of things," he growled; "no dramatic instinct. Curled darlings on the Bridge of Sighs at midnight? It doesn't match."

"Curled darling yourself," he retorted, as Grimsby clutched his arm and walked away with him. "A ripping night for a prow!"

"The village," Grimsby said, indicating the metropolis by a sweep of the arm, "looks pretty—

At the close of the day, when the hamlet is still,
And mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove—

which nobody ever does in London town."

"Good Lord! what an advertisement you'd be for a tailor, Bass," he said presently, when the lights dappled by the trees along the Embankment flashed upon diamond studs and white satin linings, just then the mode, showing under Bassett's open overcoat.

"Every man is. All wares are their own advertisement. The whole hideous show of plastered hoardings, sandwichmen, and skyscrapers is sheer waste—of money and time and energy—a clear loss to the whole community."

"Write that in a book, Bass, and plaster it over every wall and hoarding and remnant of natural beauty in the kingdom. I say, you're looking jolly white about the gills. What's the row? Faint heart before the plunge? No shirking now. Buck up! I've a card for the execution already. Look here, you don't really expect me to turn up at your wedding?"

"The bride expects it, Grim. I'm under orders to compel you."

"That's final. Then I must either spout my library or hire a top hat and frock-coat. I wouldn't do it for any other woman. I saw her at Covent Garden a while ago, from afar—I was having half a crown's worth—with all her bravery on. What action, what a smile,

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what a thoroughbred one—to be wasted on a chap like you ! ”

“ You thundering fraud ! ” Bassett said, stopping under Boadicea’s plinth to light pipes. “ I’d forgotten your luck for the moment. The will was in the papers. Half a dozen petty legacies and you residuary legatee. Any relation ? ”

“ No, nor friend either. It comes out that the poor beggar was once in love with my mother. ”

“ Well, without any humbug, I don’t know when I’ve been so glad, Grim. You sneak, to keep the good news to yourself. ”

“ It’s a white elephant, I can’t touch it, ” Grimsby mumbled, his face ruddied by the match-glow between his hands.

“ As how ? ”

“ Don’t you know how Charteris made his money ? ”

“ Wasn’t it in rubber ? ”

“ In African rubber, the raw material. He made one big deal to the good, then became partner in a firm. Sometimes the rubber didn’t come in—now this is notorious, proved to the hilt—or it came in dribblets. When this happened the agents went round the villages and filled the baskets with—*something else*. ”

“ Not with hands ? ”

“ With human hands, Bassett ; right hands chopped off at the wrist. That is how that damned money was made. ”

“ What shall you do ? ” Bassett asked, a gleam in his eyes.

“ Half to the A. P. Society, the rest back to those poor niggers somehow. Con—*found* you, Bass ; twisting a man’s hand off with your infernal paw ! ”

“ But was it all African rubber ? Didn’t he speculate on the Stock Exchange ? ”

“ Maybe—with the pile made by the rubber. What then ? ”

At Westminster

"What a sell for you, Grim. And what an immense temptation!" Adrian said slowly.

"Temptation?" cried Grimsby, "it was blood money."

Big Ben once more gave solemn assent to the music of the chimes, cabs began to issue from the gates of Parliament Yard, and dingy figures, with the dragging, furtive step and hunched and crouching mien of the houseless, grew more frequent by the waterside, resting sometimes against balustrade or lamp-post, watching the dark tide rolling to its eternal goal, and looking sharply round at every step like wild animals feeding in the open.

"The worst of being poor," Grimsby said presently, "is that a chap can't marry."

"Not if the woman is content to be poor too?"

"They never are, Bass. They want such a lot of frocks."

"Not the best of them? Not content for the man's sake?"

"Not if they are to have babies."

"Ah!" said Adrian, with a smile and a sigh. But he had many unspoken thoughts, and meditated upon them long after Grimsby had left him, before writing a short pencil note on a diary leaf in the lamplight. Then, catching a belated cab on its weary last crawl homeward, he drove to Carlton House Terrace, dropped the note in the letter-box, and went home to bed in great peace of heart.

CHAPTER VI

AT STEVENSON'S HEAD OFFICE

SIR DANIEL was accustomed to rise, not exactly with the lark, because those airy creatures of joy never distil their melodious raptures above brick and mortar, nor quite as early as those wise and wakeful speculators in the worm market, the sparrows, who never wait for the sun to call them, but not long after the orderly and sagacious rooks fare solemnly forth in sable companies to their numerous business appointments.

"Success in life," he often said, "depends upon how little sleep you can do with."

In this he agreed with Spenser, who says of Honour—

Before her gate high God did sweat ordain
And wakeful watches ever to abide—

though his notion of honour and success in life may not have tallied exactly with the poet's.

So that by the time Sir Daniel appeared at breakfast, fresh and ruddy, as if straight from pillowed dreams and cold baths, he had already done an average day's work and exhausted at least one secretary and a typewriter. No matter how prolonged his vigils might have been, he always turned up fresh and ravenous at an early and decorous family breakfast. He liked to see the pretty pensive face of Phyllis above the coffee cups and to hear Muriel's childish chatter while he skimmed his paper and sipped his coffee; he thought women and children an essential part of house decoration.

Muriel danced singing into the room and rubbed her

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golden head against the old man's shoulder like a purring cat, in return for which she received a pat and a grunt, but no look from the keen eyes running so rapidly over the printed columns. So after a great silent hug to her mother, she sat down contentedly to her bread and milk, not without hope of more fascinating fare to follow. Yet none of the interminable and unanswerable questions with which she was accustomed to pester her poor mother seemed to escape Uncle Dan, who sometimes interrupted his reading to laugh and to make a still more impossible answer to her impossible queries.

Soon the papers, all their sap extracted, were cast away and succeeded by intimate domestic chat, to season the vast piles of food that disappeared before Sir Dan's vigorous onslaught.

"My bridesmaid frock has come," Muriel proudly proclaimed. "The hat is sweet; but the page dress is the nicest. Shall you be a page, Uncle Dan?"

"Adrian seems out of sorts," Phyllis said; "he stayed on till I had to leave him last night. Nothing to say for himself—so preoccupied."

"Well, he has plenty to think about. The marriage settlements are being drawn up, and Kilmeny is exacting. Then there's the partnership. The deeds are ready, or ought to be, to-day or to-morrow." Sir Dan paused to consider the desirability of another solid dish before the ultimate raspberries and cream—both fresh from Bassett Towers. "It's a serious thing to be partner in such a concern as Stevenson's at his age. It's not like a company. I always meant it to bang everything else by being a one-man concern, and as I may drop any day, it's as well to have somebody in training to carry it on after me."

"Naturally," came in Phyllis's dulcet treble, but she wondered silently why Neville could not be the man.

"They should all go straight to hell," Muriel was heard

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thoughtfully murmuring over her plate ; “ it would save such lots of trouble.”

“ Murie ! ” shrieked her mother, “ what *are* you talking about ? ”

“ Missenaries. Mother dear,” she added plaintively ; “ why don’t they go and preach to the devil ? If only he turned good there wouldn’t never be no more bother.”

“ No more there would,” Sir Dan assented, piling raspberries on her plate. “ But Adrian doesn’t know what the responsibility is,” he added, taking the invitation cards handed him and rapidly pencilling negative or affirmative signs on them. “ Hullo ! a note from Ad ? What ? What ? ”

He opened and read the pencilled lines dropped in the box in the night and overlooked in the mass of correspondence till now ; then his face went purple, and his great fist came down on the table with such a bang and such an oath, as sent a shiver through china and silver and brought Phyllis to her feet and Muriel to her mother’s arms.

“ What has he been up to under the rose all this time, the scoundrelly young hypocrite ? ” he cried. “ Sit down, my dear, and don’t be a fool. I’ve suspected something this long time. I knew he was up to something, by George ! Haven’t you noticed it, Phyllis ? ”

“ Do you mean Adrian ? ” she asked, recognizing the writing on the cover. “ Only that he has been unlike himself lately. He was a good deal upset at not getting a word alone with you last night.”

“ He’ll be a good deal more upset when he does, if I’m not mistaken,” muttered Sir Dan, reading again under his breath. “ ‘ Must see you at once ’—‘ something of importance ’—‘ something I fear you may not like to hear.’ Great Scott ! I never kept him short—it can’t be money again. Not like to hear ? You never know what these unnaturally good chaps may be up to—I hope it’s nothing criminal—when they do kick over the traces they bring

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things to a tarnation smash, and greased lightning is a fool to their pace. No, Phyllis, nothing wrong with the boy, only some harmless tomfoolery, very likely. Yes, my dear, I shall look in before dinner, come home to dress, and dine out to-night."

He finished the raspberries, kissed Muriel, and stepped into the sumptuous motor, that stood jerking and spitting like a half-cowed demon at the door; but waited to see Muriel climb upon her long-tailed pony and trot away in charge of a groom to the Park before giving the signal to loose the spitting demon and whirl along streets of ever-thickening traffic, with hiss and quack and dust-cloud, passing omnibuses, whizzing in and out of tram-cars, vans and drays, startling horses, paralysing pedestrians, and narrowly shaving coster barrows, cabs, and broughams.

"Come to my room at one sharp," he wrote with his fountain-pen—even pens are mechanical contrivances in these days and explode in unexpected blot-showers and totally refuse to write at critical moments in revenge for the poor convenience of doing double duty as pen and inkpot combined—as he rolled smoothly to the central offices of Stevenson's in the City.

"Perhaps I kept him at Coventry a little too long," he reflected, giving the note addressed to Adrian to a porter for instant delivery. "He's going to kick against the pricks. After all I like a lad of spirit."

Adrian had not arrived yet; his energetic sire was a little in advance of his time, fewer blocks than usual having stopped his motor on its swift career. Adrian went to the office in a hansom, and on the way called upon an old university friend, D'Arcy, whose fortunes had been singular, not to say perverse, and widely different from what might have been expected. One day it had occurred to D'Arcy to fall in love with a penniless girl, governess in a family of travelling English. About that time it occurred to those English to dismiss the

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young governess, who was discovered by D'Arcy, stranded and friendless, in a great foreign city, bitterly weeping and utterly helpless. It at once occurred to D'Arcy to marry her, which he did as soon as legal forms permitted. Then it occurred to the uncle who had brought him up and meant to make him his heir to be furiously angry and tell him to shift for himself. D'Arcy, then an attaché at Vienna, was now shifting for himself and wife in London, and the pair, hardly past their first year of marriage, were absurdly happy in a small and dingy house in a smaller and even dingier side street. Thither Adrian penetrated with information he had promised and forgotten to give some days before.

White lace curtains accentuated the dinginess of this mean and flimsily-built house, which had fallen into decay almost before its crude newness had worn off; a window plant, consisting of three leaves and a bud, which had been vainly trying to unfold for months, emphasized the general barrenness. The bare-armed, smutty-faced maid, who cautiously opened the door about four inches, shut it again, stammering that she would "go and see if the master was in," whereupon D'Arcy came running out and drew Adrian through a narrow blocked passage, which smelt strongly of everything unpleasant—principally soot, mildew, boots, and dust—into a room, in which a young wife smiled above the untidiness of a half-finished breakfast, and some small living creature gurgled in a sort of basket in a corner, and by a subsequent piercing squall clearly proclaimed itself to be the baby. Crude cheap crockery, electro-silver, dingy table-linen, an atmosphere only made tolerable by the accumulated staleness of many pipes, a hideous wall paper half-hidden by some process engravings and photographs, a bicycle leaning against the wall, many full pipe-racks, a long row of boots and shoes, into a pair of which D'Arcy got by degrees while hastily finishing the congealed bacon on his plate, a work-

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basket on a side table overflowing with family mending, a baby's feeding-bottle, and a row of Bass's pale ale, made up a picture that stamped itself indelibly upon Bassett's mind, which was exasperated to madness by the aggressive cheerfulness of the Adam and Eve of this paradise.

"Luckily my wife is a capital manager," D'Arcy said afterwards, when they were on their way to the City, "so we live like fighting-cocks on about twopence a year. She puts together the most wonderful little dishes you can imagine with her own hands. The dinners she thinks out for me whenever I come home in time for dinner would astonish you."

Adrian had no doubt they would. He was a good deal bruised from falling over two buckets, a child's go-cart, and several brooms, artistically scattered about in the obscurity of D'Arcy's narrow passage. Pathetic memories of D'Arcy's fine-drawn fastidiousness, his intimate and accurate knowledge of the best points of the best places to dine at, his nice discrimination of wines and liqueurs, the dainty appointments of his college rooms, and his often-expressed dread of domesticity and the Philistine horrors of a regular and plodding life, floated before him.

"Even virtue, if not bourgeois, is tolerable," was a saying of the undergraduate D'Arcy, "and bourgeoisie itself might be endurable but for its insufferable virtuousness."

What had become of the airy, the irresponsible, the versatile, the graciously and gracefully Bohemian D'Arcy? Alas! for human greatness. The darling of embassies, the ornament of college wines and Belgravian functions, had declined to a model City clerk, cheerful and steady as a clock in his diurnal vibration between a stool in a dingy office and the pinched domesticities of a small house in a mean street. There lived D'Arcy, the married man.

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Adrian dropped him with deep but silent sympathy at his office on the way to Stevenson's, and drove on meditating sadly on the vigour of the baby's squalling.

So dear a life thine arms enfold,
And all its crying is for gold.

D'Arcy's highest present aspiration seemed to be to blossom into a stockbroker, and, after making his fortune on the Stock Exchange—a trifling operation to be effected in the course of a couple of weeks, during the intervals of playing football round the markets with top hats—to resume a more congenial way of life.

That morning's work, coloured by reflections from the D'Arcy *ménage*, seemed longer and less interesting than usual. Adrian was still musing upon the strange and appalling metamorphosis of D'Arcy, when the appointed hour summoned him to the inner apartment sacred to the head of the house.

"Well, there you are then?" said Sir Dan, genially extending his huge and hairy hand to his prodigal, without turning in the revolving chair at the writing-table, where he sat surrounded by files and weighted piles of papers and scattered leaves and packets, slips, forms, reference books, waste-baskets, speaking-tubes, all the miscellaneous implements of business. "Let bygones be bygones, lad, and begin again with a clean slate."

Adrian understood that his father intended apology for recent snubbing, whereas to pardon the prodigal was his true meaning, so he grasped the mighty fist with cordial affection and pleasurable relief.

"A pretty fellow you are, and a nice bother you've been. You've had your fling and must have kicked all the nonsense out by now, I should guess. Time to settle down and buckle to in good earnest. But before we talk about this new mess of yours, for which I suppose I shall have to rake out a fresh pile of dollars, I'll ask you a

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question. D'ye know how much you've spent in the last two years ? ”

“ I haven't an idea,” he replied, with airy geniality, “ except that it is a good deal more than my allowance.”

“ Haven't totalled it up, eh ? ”

“ No. Very likely I have memoranda somewhere, if you'd like to know the sum total.”

“ H'm! Thankee. I shouldn't be where I am if my left hand didn't know how many thousands ran through my right,” replied Sir Dan drily. “ Well, what have you got to show for these little extras, eh ? ”

“ Oh! that's a very easy sum. Nothing whatever,” was the smiling reply.

“ You can't well have less. But how the dickens you make the dollars fly beats me.”

“ My dear dad, I'm awfully sorry, but I understood that you had no wish to know. I was to draw upon you for unlimited amounts at discretion——”

“ Discretion? Oh, Lord! If *that's* discretion! ”

“ Well, I am afraid it was at indiscretion—a sort of perennial blank cheque it was to be, and no questions asked. ‘ Learn to fling your money about like a man,’ you have said a hundred times, and I—well—I've learnt it fairly well, I think.”

“ By George,” cried Sir Dan, bringing his fist down upon a red-lined paper with a bang that shook the massive table, “ you have! And yet they say you're *such* a steady chap. Don't think I grudge you a little pleasure, lad; I'm no Puritan. I've been young myself; a man's none the worse for knowing life. But, Great Scott! I do like a chap to be open and honest and not set up to be better than mere flesh and blood has any right to be, when he's secretly going the pace like blazes all the time——”

“ Father, what in Heaven's name do you mean? I've never set up to be anything and I've done nothing secretly. Reticence is not secrecy.”

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"That depends."

"Yet you enjoined secrecy. Many times—every time you so generously gave me what perhaps I ought never to have taken—you wished to know neither how nor where it went."

"And I don't wish to know; I am not going to pry into your affairs. But it must come to an end; you've had your fling, you must steady down. What is folly in a lad is crime in a respectable married man."

"Great Scott," Adrian laughed out, "a respectable married man!"

"Yes, sir; that's the part you've got to play now. And you've got one of the best and prettiest women in Europe to play it with."

"You go far," Adrian said; "some topics are—ah—better left alone."

"Well, hang it! there's no occasion to fly out and mount the high horse the moment you're pulled up. I'm not going to pry into your affairs. But if a father can't give his son advice upon moral conduct——"

"But what on earth have I done? On what grounds do you assume——"

"I assume that you are human—made of flesh and blood. Isn't that ground enough? You know best what you have done."

"My dear old dad," he said, laughing, "what on earth has come to you? Heaven knows that whatever I have done, at least I have done nothing underhand. Was I ever anything but straight?"

The keen, deep-set grey eyes blazed steadily into the full dark ones. These met the flaming scrutiny without flinching or defiance, but with some bewilderment. Their clear depths revealed honest kindness and yet covered mysteries impenetrable to Sir Dan. The boy had always been honest, he admitted, but quite incomprehensible.

"Well, well," he grumbled, "no need to squabble over

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it. Just read this little list of extras. Here we are : 'January 2, gave Adrian so much'; 'January 20, Adrian so much'; 'February 10, so much'; 'April 20, so much.' Grand total——"

"No," cried Adrian, seizing the paper and running over it, "it is impossible. I can't have had all that."

"Some things," his father said, with grim complacency, "can be got over and some can't. Arithmetic is one that can't. Whichever way you cast those columns up, they total out the same. When you rest on figures, you rest on something solid."

"Well, I *am* floored!" he said, laughing and giving back the paper; "you ought to be content with me now, dad. I've made the money fly at last. Great Scott, how money melts!"

"In some fingers," muttered Sir Dan.

"And how handy money is! I'm awfully sorry," his voice expressed apology but no regret, "I'd no notion I was fleecing you like this. Why didn't you pull me up before? Why on earth didn't you?"

"I jolly well didn't want to pull you up, Ad. I wanted you to have your head and see how much of an ass you could make of yourself. Now you see."

"Oh! I jolly well see," he assented, more amused than ever. "I'll try to screw in and pay off by instalments."

"Pay the devil!" shouted Sir Dan in a fury; "d'ye think I want the dirty dollars? D'ye think Dan Bassett can't stand a little flutter like that?"

"Well, what on earth *do* you want?" he asked.

"I want you to see what an ass you can be and chuck your wild oats and stick to business."

"I am afraid I shall never make a business man."

"Rome wasn't built in a day. Go solid for it, and see what you can do. You're no fool. But let bygones be bygones." Sir Dan tore up the paper and tossed it into a waste-basket. "Now for this last new folly of

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yours, the thing that can't wait and that I shan't like to hear. Out with it. Time is nearly up."

Adrian took two turns in the room, drew a long breath, and sat down opposite his father, who drummed impatiently on the table with a paper-cutter.

"You remember," he began nervously, "our discussion—that is to say—what I said,—because you wouldn't listen,—about the long hours of the salesmen——"

"Oh, I remember some infernal humbug about closing early Saturdays to let the men go to Communion before breakfast Sundays."

"Do you know that the foreman of the Ruxbridge Stores tried to kill his wife and child and cut his own throat three weeks ago?"

"Very sad. A steady, useful chap, but cracked. Insanity on the increase. Well?"

"The wife said at the inquest that he never came home on a Saturday night before eleven, that it was often twelve, and sometimes one, two, and three o'clock in the Sunday morning, that he was too tired to sleep or eat and often said his brain was going under the rush, that he made mistakes and worried over them in his sleep, and spoke of them waking, and that it was impossible for so few hands to work the stores."

"Poor chap. Weaklings are bound to go under. The widow gets a bonus," Sir Dan replied, with indifference.

"Father, do you know how many hours a week the men at that branch work?" Adrian asked.

"I know when every man in every branch is bound to come to work and knock off again. I know when every branch opens and closes, and I know that lazy and stupid and incompetent fellows must work overtime to make up," he said, impatiently.

"The hours are too long, father, and the hands too few."

"Nonsense. The pay is good and compares favourably with everything of the kind. Stevenson's can

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always get hands. They turn away scores of applicants. Men must work."

"Not like that. Father, I implore you to consider this——"

"And I implore you to mind your own business and let me manage mine. By George! one of the finest businesses in these islands. Small profits, quick returns. That's the way to make things hum."

"These men work on an average——"

"Bless my soul, Adrian, d'ye think I don't know how long they work? And not one of them works the hours I do. I'm at it at five every morning of my life and often before. And when do I leave off?"

"You are one in a thousand. Give them shorter hours. Think of this poor fellow's racked and broken brain."

"Look here, Adrian, I've had enough of this. Leave those matters to people who understand them. If there's a man on earth competent to deal with these labour questions, I'm that man. I represent labour and capital, manual and brain work all in one. I've been through the mill. Business isn't philanthropy. You sell things to make money and not to provide lazy and incompetent workmen with beer and skittles gratis. Great Scott! you'll be wanting me to have stuffed arm-chairs and all the papers and magazines for the salespeople in every blessed shop at this rate. Why none of these cheap cash businesses could be run with a full and short-time West End staff. All the profit would go in wages."

"Why not raise the selling prices?"

"Pff! You talk like a fool. Custom would go to retail traders. We couldn't undersell them. The *raison d'être* of the great cash stores would be gone."

"Have these great cheap cash businesses any reason for existing?"

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"Best of all reasons. They make money by the ton."

"By underselling the small trader and sweating the workpeople? Is that quite honest?"

"Look here, Adrian," said his father, rising and standing before him with flaming eyes and purple face, "this is not the first or the second time you've pestered me with this cheap socialistic rant, but it must be the last. Learn once for all that business is business and morality morality. I've always been a religious man—no saint, but a steady church-goer. My name is on countless subscription lists; I'm reckoned a sure card in every philanthropic scheme. But I'm no faddist, only an honest, substantial British merchant and financier. I've borne with ye long enough as an ignorant young donkey, but I'm damned if I'll be preached at and called a sweater and a swindler by any man living. You're too religious by half; it's unnatural at your age to be so infernally prim; you're puffed up and bursting with self-righteousness and pride. You want a good taking down. What right have you to interfere in my business? Hey?"

"None whatever. I meant neither interference nor impertinence. I only want to call your attention to facts that to me seem—deplorable—in a business in which I am interested as one of the employed; any other labourer might do the same."

"Not without getting the sack," returned Sir Daniel, his fury subsiding before Adrian's quiet gaze. "Is that opinionated humbug all you wanted to say in such a deuce of a hurry?"

"Not quite all," he replied, with a vivid sense of many wrongs in various departments of the great providing business, and a too acute remembrance of some recent transactions that even Sir Daniel called sailing pretty close to the wind. These, which occurred at a critical moment in the existence of a new company, of

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which Sir Daniel was the chief promoter and financier, were no part of Stevenson's Universal, though they lay heavy on his heart.

"I wanted," he said, hesitating, with a sudden realization of his deep-seated, life-long fear of his father, "I wish to tell you—to ask you—to let me leave Stevenson's."

"Dear me," replied Sir Daniel, sitting down with affected composure, "you wish to retire from business already? Isn't that rather previous at twenty-five?"

"More and more," Adrian continued, "I feel—I feel that I can do nothing in this business. You see how widely our views differ. I have tried—honestly and against the grain—I have tried to understand and like the business because you wished it so strongly; I've tried for two years. I can try no longer."

"H'm! What do you propose to do instead?"

"I've thought of being secretary to some public man——"

"On elevenpence halfpenny a year and slaving night and day. Twenty-four hours is a private secretary's working day."

"Another alternative is reading for the Bar."

"Nonsense. Don't be a fool," Sir Dan said genially. "You've had a handsome salary—allowance—call it what you will—and you've worked steadily, whatever those expensive diversions of yours may have been. But when a man marries he ought to stand on his own foundation, and I mean you to stand on yours. See here, lad," he added, suddenly unfolding and spreading out a sheet of engrossed parchment on the table before him, "by these deeds you become a partner in Stevenson's Universal, with a third of the total profits. You are a rich man with enormous possibilities at one stroke of the pen."

"And enormous responsibilities," Adrian returned, in a

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grave and calm voice that startled and disquieted his father. "I cannot accept this."

"W—what d'ye mean?" stammered Sir Daniel.

"Surely my meaning is obvious. How can we work together when our views differ so widely? Dear father, it would be one long dissension."

"Stuff and nonsense; these yeasty notions of yours will soon work off when you see what business means and learn to do as others do. My dear boy, if everybody gave way to these high and mighty scrupulosities fortunes would never be made, scarcely any business would be done, capital would be locked up, the whole framework of industrialism would collapse, and our present civilization fall to pieces."

— "So I often think," Adrian murmured, half to himself.

"Sensibly spoken at last. A junior partner can't expect to boss the show, as you seem to think he should; the senior takes the initiative, and the responsibility that scares you is his. Besides, it's wonderful how these wire-drawn scrupulosities evaporate before the solid satisfaction of a good thumping balance on the profit side."

"I quite realize that."

"Come now, we're getting on. In good old Samuel's phrase, 'You are about to possess the potentiality of acquiring wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.' " He took up and perused the long and quaintly worded contract, engrossed upon the parchment with many a Gothic flourish and red-inked capital, while he mouthed the Johnsonian phrase with relish, "'Beyond the dreams of avarice,' boy."

"Not to possess, but to decline—with many thanks—with sincere thanks," Adrian said.

Sir Dan looked fiercely over his spectacles.

"A man isn't offered such a gift twice," he said. "Stop and think—don't be a fool. D'ye understand what I'm doing? D'ye realize what you are offered?"

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Can ye grasp the fact that I am stripping myself of a third of a very large source of income for ye? D'ye mean to say ye fling my gift in my face?"

"The gift is far too great; you are too generous——"

"Take it," shouted Sir Daniel, dashing the parchment across the table. "Take it, you infernal young fool, or by the Lord who made us—— Read, read, read!"

Bassett affected to read, while Sir Dan strode up and down with loud steps, audible breath, and a deepening purple on his face, and his own heart knocked feverishly at his ribs and the clock hands moved over a measurable space. Then he turned from the deeds and looked at Sir Daniel, his eyes full of tears.

"Don't be vexed," he said. "The offer is magnificent; but—I cannot be in Stevenson's on any footing."

The old man rushed at him with a flaming glance that met an answering flame.

"Stop!" cried Adrian. The peremptory word and incisive tone arrested the infuriated old man. "Father," he added, more gently, "don't spoil our friendship—your life-long kindness and generosity."

"You've pretty well spoilt your life," Sir Daniel gasped, turning so that the table was between them. "You've insulted me too deeply to be forgiven. You refuse to be in my business? Why? Because in your priggish superiority you accuse me of sweating, of over-reaching, of dishonesty——"

"I accuse you of nothing——"

"You say my methods are immoral—that you can't work with me. You judge and condemn me."

"My views may be wrong, but I can't go against them. No man can go against conscience. Could you? Father, if you thought as I do, you know, you must know, that you would have nothing to do with such a business as Stevenson's."

That was the last straw. Sir Daniel heard in silence,

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cold anger gathering black and ever blacker upon his heavy brows.

"I should play the fool like Tolstoi, no doubt," he replied, with concentrated bitterness. "Come now, it's Stevenson's or nothing, for I'm damned if I'll give a red cent to a fellow who turns up his nose at his father's honest business. Think before you leap. Think of Isobel!"

The blood left the young man's face. "She is loyal," he said, "and she has not a mercenary thought."

"A woman may not be mercenary because she refuses to turn a mangle, or disloyal because she dislikes living in a hovel. Belle must marry a rich man."

"Why say more? I can be and do nothing in Stevenson's as it exists. My first action would be to change everything."

He turned to go, but Sir Dan stopped him.

"If you go you never come back," he said. "You know that I am a man of my word."

"And so am I of mine."

"You're too fine for work. Too fine for anything. I should have bred ye harder. Play the fool your own way, then; be off with you and see what you can do for yourself. Your allowance stops to-day. I wash my hands of you. Be off, I say, and never let me see your face again."

Turning away, he began speaking down a tube. Adrian paused.

"Don't let us part like this," he said, when his father took a penknife and began savagely cutting the parchments into long strips. "I have been clumsy, I have made you angry, and I am sorry. You have always been good to me. There is nothing I would not do for you—except——"

"What I ask," growled Sir Daniel, turning away. "Go, I say, go, and see how you like starving on fine notions. Never darken my doors again. Go!"

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The door opened, and the clerk summoned through the speaking-tube came in with a bundle of papers, but on seeing Adrian was about to withdraw.

"Come in, Sykes, come in," said Sir Daniel impatiently, and nothing remained to Adrian but to go. He went slowly and with a last lingering look as he turned at the door, which promptly closed upon him.

Slowly he went down the stairs, dazed, yet with a curiously light and eased feeling, and slowly returned to the room in which he was accustomed to work. There he found Neville, waiting impatiently before going out to lunch, to give some instructions about the work. "Hullo!" cried Neville when he saw him, "what on earth's the matter?"

"I'm leaving Stevenson's," he replied.

"You've had a row with the old man, eh?"

"A rather serious difference, I'm afraid. But don't ask me. He'll tell you," he added, beginning to put things in order as if leaving for the night. "Don't bother now, I'll see you another day."

"Oh, he'll come round, you bet," Neville prophesied. "My turn now," he said to himself as he went off to his lunch with keen enjoyment and sharpened appetite.

"He'll come round," Sir Daniel prophesied to himself, with more sincerity than Neville, but with equal lack of foundation. "A fellow who makes money fly like that will soon feel the pinch of poverty." Cutting off supplies was to Sir Dan like keeping an overfed lap-dog upon a bone a day, a sovereign remedy.

"Adrian has left me," he said without preamble at dinner that night, when the servants had gone. "He has behaved badly; he is not to be admitted if he calls."

Phyllis dropped the peach she was peeling and looked at him in silence.

"Adrian! behaving badly? What do you mean?" she asked.

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"What I say," he replied shortly, and began talking of something else.

But all day deep in his mind there was an under-current of wonder as to how all that money had gone, and it was not till his long day ended in the beginning of the next, and he laid his head upon the pillow, that an explanation suddenly flashed upon him and he thought he saw a deep-laid, long-prepared scheme. The money must have been quietly amassed and put aside to meet this crisis and make Adrian independent of him. That explained equally his temerity in provoking the crisis and his tranquillity in meeting it. This thought was very bitter. Both his sons had refused to act with him and live his life; it was hard—the harder now that only one was left. He had so set his heart on having a son to carry on that splendid business of his own making and the brilliant schemes based upon it. He was growing old and unequal to the perpetual strain and excitement of the one pursuit for which he really cared, and in which his ambition was boundless as ever—the pursuit of wealth. Wealth meant power; commerce and industrialism, he thought, were henceforth to turn all the wheels of life, political and social. Society once rested upon physical force; soon it would rest upon organized and combined commerce and industry.

After all, Sir Dan and his son had at least one idea in common: each saw a great future moulded by commerce and organized industry; but Sir Dan saw in it a predatory force and Adrian a beneficent instinct. But the father's commerce set every man's hand against his neighbour's, while the son's joined man to man by mutual service.

CHAPTER VII

AT RANELAGH

POOR Lady Biddy's awakening on the morning after Adrian's evening visit had been even less cheerful than her family's. Her glass told her sad tales of ebbing beauty and waning health; gloom and reproach sat on her father's brow and looked from her mother's eyes; elsewhere she read various shades of pity, contempt, and aversion. Her head ached and swam, she felt the chains of her bondage tightening round her, and, throwing herself upon Isobel's shoulder, wept bitterly.

Isobel prescribed a cup of tea and a ride in the Park. The horses came and the sisters rode off, a rose in its first unsullied bloom and a sadly faded and bedraggled one, and came back glowing and gay, Biddy firmly purposed in her morning penitence, which rarely outwore the noon, to rid herself for ever of her terrible enemy, and Belle intoxicated with the wine of youth, health, and gladness, and perfectly satisfied with poor Biddy's promises and vows of amendment.

The Marquis of Aynesworth's four-in-hand conveyed Isobel and her mother, a Hildenheim motor Patricia, and the family car Biddy and her father, to Ranelagh in the afternoon. The Marquis was playing in a polo match and asked Lady Isobel to wish hard for his side, because if she did they would infallibly win. She promised very sweetly, so sweetly that she beguiled him of the reins and personally conducted the four splendid blacks from Hammersmith Bridge through motors, cabs,

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carriages of splendour drawn by high-stepping steeds, advertisement-plastered omnibuses, bicycles, and coal-carts, and other four-in-hands, through the tree-shadowed gates of Barnes Elms and up the long lane to the sweep before the club-house, in great style and sublime disregard of the frantic gestures of infuriated policemen, scattering pedestrians, vehicles, led polo ponies and riders impartially in her triumphant path.

The Marquis sat tight and reflected that a man can die but once and that his affairs were in perfect order; Lady Kilmeny was too much afraid of losing her hat and the lovely tresses on which it rested to fear anything else; but the two other occupants of the front seat were much relieved and left off saying their prayers when the wheelers sat on their haunches and the grooms sprang to the leaders' heads; while the fair charioteer cheerfully observed, as she was being handed down, that she had had a grand time, that the four blacks were ducks with mouths of velvet, and that you might drive them with perfect ease and safety up one side of Mont Blanc and down the other.

"I really think *you* might," Aynesworth said with absolute sincerity; for it was evident to him that some cherub in special charge of Lady Isobel must have safeguarded the four-in-hand from destruction all the way down. "The blacks are not often privileged to be driven in such glorious style."

"It's the Irish blood," Lady Kilmeny explained, anxiously feeling for her hairpins and wondering if her hat was straight, "riding and driving come by nature to wild Irish girls like ours."

He bowed the brief remnant of bow left to these court-mannered days, but his thoughts were beyond expression. Looking thoughtfully at Isobel following her mother into the house to repair damages to the elder lady's toilet, he came to the conclusion that she was as pretty and fascinating a girl as he had ever seen. He had seen a

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good many in his nine-and-thirty years, a great part of them spent at the most brilliant courts of Europe.

Never had Isobel looked more radiantly happy than on that glorious summer afternoon, in the bright-coloured crowd scattered over the deep elastic turf shadowed by a wall of thick-leaved elms, behind the substantial Georgian house. The polo ground was thick with spectators. The most interesting match of the day was being played between an English club and some glittering Indian princes. On the shady side of the ground a solid bank of brilliantly arrayed females, several chairs deep, lined the ropes, giving the impression of a flower border in fullest summer bloom. On the inner edge of this Lady Kilmeny sat with Isobel and Biddy, the latter heavily powdered, bisted, pencilled, and rouged, yet looking older than her mother, whose make-up was more artistic and less necessary. Isobel's delicate rose-tints and laughing eyes needed no artifice to meet the full glow of the July day; she was all sparkle and bloom, enjoying the homage of Aynesworth, who stepped up to the parterre edge, bare armed, bare headed, his tall well-carried figure set off to advantage by the succinct and serviceable polo dress, and besought her to wish hard for him; enjoying the gay and beautiful spectacle and stimulating thrill of the animated throngs that swarmed over the park-like pleasaunce; enjoying the soft summer breeze, the blue sky flooded with clear light, the hum of voices, bursts of low laughter, and strains of music from the Guards' band; but most of all enjoying the prospect of being found presently by Adrian, and hearing him tell some delightful news of which she already had the secret. Four-in-hands kept driving up and dropping bright companies on the deep turf, and driving off; landaus and victorias dashed in their wake, and discharged their gay freight; and quacks, shrieks, and groans of puffing motors made harsh discord. A little stir drew attention to a landau with scarlet liveries and glittering steeds, whence

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a splendour of flowing silken robes and jewelled turbans descended and paced in solemn majesty, attended by a gorgeous suite. Slowly the splendour pierces the parting crowd, dark eyes glow beneath the jewels, as haughty and unconscious of all around as those of some splendid, silken-furred cat; slowly it reaches the sacred enclosure and is still. Then suddenly the band breaks off in the middle of a phrase, hats fly off, the gay parterre rises at the deep and solemn chords of the National Anthem, and silent wheels furrow the velvet sward, forbidden to wheels less august; royalty is present.

It was then that Adrian, after much fruitless reconnoitring of stand and bank and line of flower-like sunshades and millinery, caught sight of the graceful figure he was seeking, in a gleam of sunshine that drew out the gold of her hair and the silver of her cavalier's dark, close-cropped head. But the three-ranked parterre was too densely set to give passage to him; there was nothing for it but to wait while Lord Aynsworth, lingering to the last moment and flying across the ground to his pony dancing impatiently in the groom's hands, sprang into the saddle, seized the lance-like club, and dashed into position for the signal.

Then the ball of contention was thrown; the wiry, cat-like ponies, who seemed very little inconvenienced by the men on their backs, flew after and fought for it with the joyous, playful eagerness of kittens, hunching one another here and hustling there, with an intelligent gaiety delightful to see, while the inferior beings on their backs hindered the game by what seemed aimless and fussy strokes, with long and awkward hammer-ended poles. At least, that was the view of the game imparted to the Marquis by Isobel and hotly contested by her mother. Polo reminded Lady Kilmeny of the days of chivalry; she seemed to see gallant knights ranged in the lists, lance in rest—"A polo club is just like a lance, Belle, especially when not being used"—contend-

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ing for the meed of honour 'before the eyes of ladies and of kings'—only instead of having too much on like the knights, polo riders have too little."

"How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favours lightly fall,"

Aynesworth said, showing the splintered spear-shaft, which did truly and literally "crack and fly," hanging from his wrist.

Isobel's laughing eyes were bent on the Indian princes ; she commended their beauty and grace, and exalted their gallant demeanour and gracious acceptance of applause over the morose and shamefaced bearing of her countrymen. Adrian saw what appeared to be a gay and animated discussion between this pair and was seized with a great longing to crack a polo club over the head of the most noble the Marquis of Aynesworth. But a bell rang, the Marquis flew, and a fresh set of kittenish ponies with inconvenient men on their backs, played about the grass with the ball, and Isobel turned and caught sight of the grave, beautiful young face watching her, with such a flash of joy and such a smile of recognition as made his cheek burn and his heart throb.

The waiting was easy then till it was possible to go upon the polo ground and reach the parterre, and finally carry off his prize to shaded and tranquil regions where tea and intimate converse might be had.

But even then Lady Kilmeny was found to be dying for light refreshment, while Biddy, pale and haggard with the agony of her torturing desire, and revolving impossible schemes for its appeasement, went off with an attendant swain in another direction, ostensibly for fruit and ices. It took time to evade the elder lady's society and settle her comfortably with a teapot, a general officer of distinction, and a dish of strawberries under an acacia tree ; and then at last the lovers slipped easily through the brilliant toilets, with only a raised hat here and half

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a phrase of small talk there to hinder them, and dexterously skirting croquet ground and golf course, lapsed into green and gracious solitudes by the waterside. Here they found a thoughtfully contrived rustic seat, made of two arm-chairs conjoint, so as to bring the occupants face to face and side by side. Sinking into this and clasping hands on the division which united and separated the seats, they looked into each other's eyes in a sweet silence, with such pure and perfect happiness as comes to few, and to those only in the rare heyday and bloom of life.

Afterwards he remembered every detail of her dress, the broad white hat wreathed with La France roses, the modish yet simple gown of silky transparence in paler shades of the same rose, which was repeated in the feathery fluffiness of the sunshade, the whole leading up from fresh live roses in the corsage to fresh living bloom in the face, with rare point lace and pearls toned to the whiteness of throat and forehead. The slender, white-gloved hand in his, the azure brilliance of long-lashed eyes, the unconscious grace, and the tender, crimson warmth of soft young lips, completed an unforgettable picture.

In this green place the hum of many voices was hushed; water rustled through the sedge and a blackbird fluted brokenly in pauses of music borne in softened fitfulness from the distant band, and the light swish of silk trailing on the close sward was unheard, when a dark-eyed lady in white, with an attendant frock-coated cavalier, reached an opening in the surrounding greenery.

"There they are," said the cavalier, whose face was square and speech abrupt.

"Come away," whispered the lady, whose light touch on his arm stopped and turned him.

They had but a momentary glimpse not easily forgotten of Isobel's slender grace, set off by the strong dark face and knightly air of Adrian, outlined firmly upon the green gloom and shadowed water.

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"Sometimes," Airedale said presently, "the gods are kind; then they take every gift in the immortal treasury and heap them upon the head of one chosen beloved mortal."

"Sometimes on the heads of two," the lady replied. "You can think of nothing those two lack that makes for happiness."

"Blanche, will you never give me what she has given him?" he asked, stopping by the waterside.

"Jim, dear Jim, can we give what is not ours? Don't ask again, dear, it hurts."

He turned and looked long upon tear-filled eyes and tremulous lips, then bowed slightly and walked silently on with her, till they were lost in the maze of moving groups crossing and recrossing the sunny turf.

It was a relief to both when poor Lady Somersby, unable to collect a bridge party, and sadly conscious that the orange tint of her hair was both unnatural and unbecoming, came up, full of small wants and petty grievances.

In the meantime the lovers had not spoken. Adrian, still a little breathless and wholly bruised in heart from the morning's encounter, hesitated to say what he was dying to tell, for fear of breaking the spell of happiness in the touch of the slender gloved hand in his, and Isobel, a little wearied by her own gaiety, was content to be still. So the golden, irrecoverable moments flew by, till at last he forced himself to speak.

"How hard it is to get a word alone with you," he said; "the fairy princess had only to be hewn out of the brier-roses once, but fresh briars grow round my princess every day."

"And pray, is your princess not worth breaking swords for?"

"Ah! isn't she?"

"Soon the tables will be turned and I shall never be able to get a quiet word with you. It will be business

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by day and clubs by night. As if I didn't know what wives have to put up with. Let the little victim play though conscious of her doom."

"Belle!"

"Come now, I am waiting for the good news. Have I to congratulate the junior partner?" she asked, with a gay smile, taking away her hand and rearranging her roses. "A little bird told me, a little bird with a grey beard."

"There is no junior partner," he said, a little startled, "and I have done with Stevenson's. That is what I have been wanting to tell you."

"Adrian! what can you mean?" she cried, all the relaxed grace of her body suddenly tense and erect.

"I have had a serious difference with my father, Isobel," he replied. "There are things in that business for which I cannot be responsible, which seem to me unjust. I asked my father to alter them or let me leave the business. I meant to consult you before taking this serious step, but I couldn't get a word with you. Then this partnership forced my hand. You remember Donald Mactaggart? that he was simply broken with the strain of the long hours? and that poor fellow who took his own life? Well, my father thinks it necessary to have long hours and to employ few hands if the business is to pay. He says it's always done."

"And are you so much wiser than the poor dear old man, Adrian?"

"I see these things from another point of view."

"And you throw away this partnership for a scruple?" she asked, the soft brilliance of her eyes hardening.

"Certainly."

"And what are you going to do?" came the quick business-like question.

The brief sketch of his plans that she received in reply disconcerted, even appalled her. It meant such utter ruin, was so absolutely impossible.

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"Lord Aynesworth's secretary? You?" she exclaimed, when he alluded to that possibility.

"Belle, darling," he sighed presently; "I fear it means postponing the marriage for a time."

"For a time? for ever," was the quick reply. "Adrian, you must make it up with your father at once, unless you wish to spoil both our lives. He is not a man to offend. Any quarrel with you—whom he adores—would be serious."

"Serious? He refuses to see me ever again, stops my allowance henceforth from to-day. It is most serious, perhaps irreparable. He is one of those strong, vividly feeling men who forget nothing and do nothing by halves. The whole of my worldly wealth consists now of the personalty of a bachelor in chambers and several debts—I was forgetting the dear little house in Berkeley Square—but those things are not all paid for. My dear, we shall have to wait—and I shall have wronged you horribly in a way. Jacob was content with his seven years' service, but nobody knows what Rachel felt. Once you wanted to be poor—you wanted to be a work-girl—I was to be a lift man."

"Work-girls are born, not made—at least, not of people whose lives have been one long training to use wealth and power gracefully," she replied, a growing hardness in her clear voice. "Adrian, you don't realize things; you are too much in the clouds to see life in right proportion. Poverty is all very well for the poor, for those born to it. You have never been poor—we have, we Mostyns. But our poverty has never been absolute, abject, squalid."

"That I would never offer you. No, I must carve out a fortune for you, somehow, in spite of fate."

"That you will never do," was the emphatic rejoinder. "Such men as you are never rich—except by inheritance—men of subtle scruples and acutely sensitive honour. How can they be rich? Some shadowy ghost of a scruple startles them, some microscopic doubt—and without

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pause, without thought, they throw fortune to the winds, as you seem to have done."

"Isobel, there are moments when it is impossible to pause. All the acute moments, the crises of life, are like this. At once, without a moment's warning, the thing springs upon you: you stake your all upon it, and you must decide then and there, out of the depths of you, according to the light in you, without hesitation—on the impulse that is probably the result of all you ever thought and felt before in all your life. This is what the Greeks meant by Fate; this is the meaning of the modern phrase that character is Fate. The thing was inevitable, dearest, but it is very bitter to me, for your sake more than bitter. Can a sense of honour be too acute? Could you see me sink beneath my own standard and palter with what I know to be wrong?"

"What is the art of living but compromise—a perpetual adjustment of ideals to realities—a fitting of wishes and hopes and thoughts to necessary conditions?"

"Oh!" he had risen and turned impatiently away, "men sell their souls every day—we all know that—and women too. No, darling, you don't know what you are saying. You are a little breathless, as I am, by the suddenness of this blow. You would be the last to wish me to take the lower, the less honourable, course. Isobel, I love you and have always loved you, as much, I truly think, as a man can possibly love a woman, and you love me and have loved me long, and we have grown into each other's life and become accustomed to think of each other as bound by the closest and holiest of ties. We dare trust, we dare ask, much of each other. So I ask you, Isobel, do you love me enough to be poor for my sake?"

They were standing by the water's quiet flow, where the shadows made a mystic gloom pierced by rare spaces of luminous clarity, in which every pebble, weed, and living

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creature showed to the stream's bed ; face to face they stood, hers slightly lifted towards his superior height, her lips set firm and her gaze unflinching, almost defiant, till he spoke of his love ; then her face quivered, her eyes fell, scalded by sudden tears, and she turned and looked into the water, over the soft darkness of which two swans were gliding. He drew her to him, reluctant but yielding, her hands pressed to his breast, her face averted.

" You talk very lightly of poverty," she said presently ; " you dally pleasantly with the thought of it. It is no airy trifle, Adrian, but a very grim and strong and cruel reality. You have no proper conception of the uses of wealth."

" My dearest, wealth means power ; it means mental repose, freedom from petty vexation and corroding cares. Poverty is a prison, chains, slavery, suffering, pain, and humiliation. Yes, it is a very grim and grey and cruel reality, Isobel. But it is possible to be poor and yet make many rich, to have nothing and possess all things."

" Adrian, the man who said that was a celibate."

" Ah ! " he stepped back and let go her hands, struck by the ice edge in her voice and the new look on her face.

" If it be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven," she said, " it is impossible to be good in an average workaday way, much less to be happy under—how much ?—a year. What was Becky Sharp's figure ?—the whole philosophy of life is in it—mine is higher than hers. For I was born not in an Irish cabin but an Irish castle."

Could this be Isobel ? Her features had lost their soft and gracious roundness, her very colour had hardened.

" Ah ! I had forgotten that," he replied, with a cold sharpness that startled her.

" Dear," she returned gently, " you are like a child in worldly things. You don't recognize the duty of keep-

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ing what we are born to. You sell your birthright for a whim. If every one inquired so minutely into the sources of their wealth, whose title-deeds would stand? And even if your windmill were indeed a monster, why not ride round and disarm him by subtlety and persuasion?"

"No doubt I was clumsy and headlong. I was taken unawares, else I might not have offended my father so deeply. But the crisis must have come sooner or later. Isobel, I see quite clearly now that I ought not to ask you to wait for me. I came into your life only to trouble it. I will go out of it and leave you in peace. But you are young—life has much to offer you—you will get over this."

"Adrian! Adrian!" she cried, almost piteously, going to him with outstretched hands, "only make it up with your father and all will be well. I cannot change my nature. I might as well try to be a fish, a tree, or one of those swans, as to be a poor man's wife. But I love you, and love you, and love you," she sobbed, clinging to him with a passion that stirred him to the depths.

The band was silent now; the polo players, wielding their long clubs like knights at the tilting, no longer flashed between the boughs in the distance; sunbeams were turning dusty gold and touching the underside of leaves; coach horns blared, motors bellowed and quacked; coach after coach, moving banks of flowers with their freight of bright attires, rolled away under thick-leaved trees; impatient motors sputtered and hissed viciously between them; the time was growing short. "Make it up, Adrian," she implored in rich low tones, "make it up—if you love me."

"It can never be made up, Isobel, never; unless my father changes nearly all his views of life, and that a strong and determined nature like his could not do in a day."

Never before had she felt the beauty and noble bearing

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of him, the clear-cut distinction of his face so deeply, the charm of his smile, the richer, deeper note in his voice. She also felt the finality of his words and realized that he was his iron-willed father's own son.

With a passionate sigh and a despairing gesture, she turned and went back to the club-house. He waited a moment and then overtook her in three quick strides.

"I shall always love you, you and no other woman, as long as I live," he said.

Then they walked together through the thinning groups of croquet- and golf-players, over gravel and turf, silent and feeling the chasm widen between them at every step.

It had been a full day; there was a great crush of shining carriages, dancing horses, and harassed coachmen, surging and swaying in a dense ordered mass in front of the house, and complicated by the arrival of people streaming down from town to dine. Everybody in the hall vainly demanded carriages packed fast in the distant crush; those vehicles that had crawled in line to the steps looked vainly for occupants inextricably jammed in a struggling mass of dowagers and daughters in the hall. Amongst these the despairing face and shimmering attire of Lady Kilmeny were dimly discernible. She was certain that the four blacks were all standing on their hind legs in turn in front of those unattainable entrance steps. Everybody who was anybody shimmered in that year, especially Lady Kilmeny, so that she was visible from afar and was at last gallantly extricated by the united efforts of Adrian and Lord Kilmeny, who drew her through the surging mass of millinery at the end of a walking-stick. The final deliverance of the imprisoned lady was effected by sheer force; she was literally lifted out of the mass and dragged off to the coach, where the leaders were trying to look the wheelers in the face.

Isobel was already on the box; her mother was with

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considerable effort hoisted up to the seat behind her. It was evident that Lord Aynesworth's attention was divided pretty equally between the younger lady and the impatient blacks, the piloting of which through two blocked currents of vehicles was no trifle.

When the four-in-hand was vanishing behind the elm-tops Isobel turned and saw Adrian in the crowd on the steps. She bowed, he raised his hat; they were parted.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PICTURE

UNCONSCIOUS alike of the crowd and the vehicles struggling slowly through its packed mass in the slant, sun-pierced shadows, Adrian stood long, his eyes fixed on the trees that hid the four-in-hand from sight, his face rigid as marble. Carriage after carriage struggled to the steps, took up its freight, and rolled away; people spoke and he replied; the air cooled deliciously; trees glowed velvety in reddening sunrays; swifts took their pleasure in airy evolutions across the clear blue, uttering their strange wild cries as they darted; the west glowed deeper and deeper in sunset ardour; the crowd was rapidly thinning.

To the younger Hildenheim, handing Lady Eileen into his great scarlet motor, it was a beautiful and consoling thought that his father and he could buy up half the people present.

"I wonder," he murmured, while the sputtering car waited in a long jam of carriages by the gate, "how many of the frocks here this afternoon are paid for?"

"A very easy sum—none," was the cheery reply. "What I should like to know is, how many will eventually be paid for? But I never got into higher arithmetic."

Presently Adrian was roused by a hearty cuff on the shoulder and a cordial "Hullo, Bass!" to see the cheerful and friendly face of Airedale. "Waiting for yesterday, eh?"

"Not quite, Jim; but I believe I've a motor some-

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where waiting for me. Let's drive through the jam for it."

"Why so dull and dumb, young sinner?" he was asked on the road home. "Buck up, and face the music. You'll soon be used to being called 'Bassett, the married man.'"

"No, Jim, I shall never be used to that," he said, with sad earnest.

"Some meaning may possibly underlie that cryptic utterance, or again, it may not. Midsummer luncheons, especially when largely composed of iced drinks, are responsible for much. Come, Adrian, out with it. There's evidently been a row with somebody."

"Oh! with everybody and everything."

"You and your governor never pulled together," was Airedale's comment upon the story of the rupture. "There's not a drop of his blood in you. Nature often plays these pranks. Poor dear Belle! She's right, Bass. She couldn't do on 'love in a hut with water and a crust.' She is a woman who asks many things of life. But do we make our characters? Why the elements that result in her charming self—a fine and subtle and complex blend—were set going hundreds of years ago. After all, heredity is pagan fate and puritan predestination."

"Or the warp upon which the pattern of life is woven."

Stripped of everything, breathless from the shock that had torn his life asunder and made a deep impassable fissure between yesterday and to-day, Adrian woke next morning in a great peace that was partly the apathy of fatigue, and began to take stock and set his house in order in workmanlike style. Columns and columns of figures soon covered red-lined papers and were duly cast up and balanced. Old accounts, memoranda and bank-books were raked out and found to produce amazing totals. How had all the money gone? Theatre parties soon run into three figures. Various pleasures and amusements, usual to gilded youth, but stale and stupid in re-

The Picture

trospert, showed how easily money liquefies in such flames. Stable accounts, horses trained and running to lose, hunters eating their heads off, a new motor and all its current expenses, the yacht now laid up for the winter : these things mounted up, but not to such enormous totals as Sir Dan had showed him. Even the house in Berkeley Square and all its costly bric-à-brac hardly' accounted for this perpetual drain of gold upon the generous old father. Yet a thousand guineas for a Sèvres vase, and nearly as much for a mirror frame of carved ivory, with a few hundreds for a miniature here, a painting there, and the cost of dainty pieces of goldsmithery, priceless buhl cabinets, exquisite marquetry, and rare old Japanese china and bronzes, easily run into five figures. The solid truth, that spending money is a fine art and wasting it a habit more easily acquired than lost, faced the rich man's son, to whom a lavish and excessive expenditure in every direction had by dint of careful practice become second nature.

A letter from Phyllis—very brief—interrupted an exercise in arithmetic that nobody ever enjoys.

"Dear Adrian,—What can I do ? I am not to admit you if you call. What *have* you done ? I have never seen your father like this. Every trifle belonging to you here is to be collected and sent to you. He is making a new will to exclude you. Do try to pacify him. He says he has no son. But I am always, as before, your loving cousin —"

The theory of starving into submission was dear to Sir Daniel. He knew better than Adrian that his son's possessions consisted chiefly of debt ; he could not conceive the possibility of any one in such straits holding out for a scruple. It was not, he reasoned, as if it were a question of actual right and wrong. Great wealth had not so dulled his moral sense nor love of gain so degraded him as to make him capable of actual technical dishonesty;

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he drew the line at that. He felt there was all the difference in the world between taking five shillings from a man's pocket and getting the better of him by as many thousands through adroit misrepresentations in a bargain; the first was larceny, the second business.

Adrian's fads and high-flown notions were the result of luxurious breeding and ignorance of life; a brief acquaintance with that stern reality, want, would act like a tonic upon his ethical system and quickly dissipate all those fine-drawn fancies. "Let him feel the pinch of poverty," he said, "let him look everywhere for means to meet his liabilities and find none; that will bring him to his senses and show him what sort of stuff the world is really made of. He has never known what it is to want a piece of gold in his pocket or ample credit at his bank. Wait till he has neither gold nor banker. I gave him the best education to be had for money, but I forgot the best of all—the education of want. He'll soon feel the pinch, though he'll never go to the hard school I went to; he'll never be hungry or cold or houseless, and he'll never see"—Sir Daniel's voice quivered—"his mother and her children starving."

"How long do you think he'll hold out?" Neville asked.

"Six months at the very least—I'd almost give him a year," Sir Daniel said after a little thought. "His *Lehrjahre* those months will be; they'll teach him that his old dad's life-work is not to be despised; they'll make a man of him. And Belle, if she's worth her salt, will wait for him till he comes to his right mind again."

The dismay in the Mostyn family was not to be put in words, nor was the criminal folly of quarrelling with such a parent as Sir Dan held to be at all measurable by human capacity. Only one person in that family, the head of it, discerned a faint ray of comfort in this tribulation; he was even disposed to side with Adrian. To miss the millions involved in this brilliant match was a

The Picture

calamity that Lord Kilmeny by no means minimized. But of late, and especially since the after-dinner scene at Carlton House Terrace, he had been most uncomfortable about the match, and his discomfort had not been lessened by such hints and whispers as a newly sensitized ear is quick to catch.

"It will all come right," Biddy prophesied, with more optimism than she felt. "Most tiresome and stupid to set up a quarrel just before the wedding. They'll make it up—people always fall out over money and make it up again—and there will be a quiet country wedding in Ireland later on."

"No, Biddy," her father corrected. "They will make it up, but Bassett can never be in a position to marry Belle—or at all events not for more years than any woman could be expected to wait. He'll have to start fresh on his own foundation; he may distinguish himself, but he will never be anything but a poor man. I always liked the lad, and I'm glad he has done the straight thing."

Phyllis's letter was no surprise to Adrian. The new will was characteristic; his father never did things by halves; but, when sundry packets and boxes from him arrived at his chambers, each separate trifle returned seemed like a separate and distinct slap in the face. And when some more packages addressed in Isobel's hand came still later, it was like a stab in the heart. She might at least have burnt these letters and gifts of his.

Towards night Wullie Grierson came in, blank-faced and dismayed, to know the meaning of the letter received from him.

"The literal meaning, Wullie," he said. "There is to be no wedding and no household, so you cannot take the post in my house that you have been training for. But I could help you to a place under a butler elsewhere."

"I'll no take service elsewhere," Wullie protested; "and I'll no tak the siller ye sent. Gin I canna be wi' ye I'll just go back to the golfing."

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"Who knows? Service might have been the wrong thing for you, Wullie."

"But yersel'?" Wullie asked. "What'll ye be doing the now? Will I no help ye?"

Before long bills began to pour in and creditors flocked round like vultures, attracted by some mysterious scent of insolvency, and when the last claim had been considered and the last calculation made, it was a relief to find that a sale of everything would balance the debts. That was allowing for the chances of poor bidding at Christie's, where subsequently pictures, china, and all manner of costly curios were sold before crowds of curious or interested people, fetching a third less than had been given for some of them a few weeks before in the same place.

When at last, utterly heart-sick, Adrian rose from these calculations, his eye was caught by the beautiful reproduction of Marshland's rich young ruler on the wall, and his nerves soothed by the æsthetic charm of it. He found a new depth of feeling in the face of him who looked on the young man and loved him, a stronger hint of divinity in the profound and compassionate and yearning gaze before which the youth "went away grieved" by the burden of his riches. He stood long before the picture. Certainly the young man must have repented and come back; he had been so much loved, and had come so near perfection. But it must have been hard. "Sell all thou hast" to one who had apparently made such good use of riches was indeed a startling command.

While he looked and mused a lightning thought struck fierily through him with solemn, awe-filled gladness—What if that hard command had been issued to *him*?

Was it by chance that Marshland had unconsciously given *his* features to the young ruler? that his father had chosen that especial painting to give him? His miniature, with the gladness of youth in the eyes; done

The Picture

in university days, and given to Isobel, lay in its jewelled frame before him, as she had returned it. Yes; there was a strong resemblance to the face in Marshland's painting. What if the Voice had spoken often, but to deaf, or secretly grieved, ears—in that terrible East London misery from which he had “gone away grieved” indeed? Beyond all doubt, in the revelation of those unjust practices in his father's business, the Voice had spoken and with no uncertain sound; and this time he had heard and, however dimly, understood. Yes; with awe and trembling hope, he dared to think that this time the summons had not entirely been refused.

A great strength enfolded and a vast hope thrilled him; the picture swam in sudden tears; the sins of his youth rose up before him; he covered his face and bowed his head.

PART III

LEHRJAHRE

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse—

CHAPTER I

THE MINISTER'S WEDDING

THE usual nine days' wonder over the breaking off of the Mostyn marriage and sudden and total disappearance of the bridegroom came and passed. Much conjecture and many fables were built on this disappearance, the general impression being that Bassett had done something rather more than shady.

Over teacups heads were shaken and dark hints whispered; in club arm-chairs and window recesses definite statements were made, challenged, refuted, and confirmed by infallible proofs. "When these religious chaps break out, as they are bound to do sooner or later, they do go the pace and no mistake.—Bassett was not the tame and priggish youth he posed for. There was hot blood and vigorous manhood under that quiet and correct exterior. The old man had been nearly broken by the debts he had paid over and over again.—The young one had gambled on the Stock Exchange, at Monte Carlo, in secret clubs and vile haunts that elude police regulations, and in private houses, everywhere.—He had been a middle-class Heliogabalus," etc.

Tales of his extravagance were endless—baths of perfumed milk, priceless jewellery worn unseen, every wanton excess of refined sensuousness, was attributed to the heir of Sir Daniel's fabulous fortune, which, to the amazement of these historians, was still to all intents and purposes intact.

People flocked to Christie's and to the house in Berke-

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ley Square expecting to see marvels—parquets of pure gold and wainscots studded with diamond and sapphire, no doubt—and were disappointed. Costly and beautiful china, priceless editions of scarce and valuable books, rich and lovely needlework, valuable prints and engravings, and all those choice fragments of art and craftsmanship, that cultured taste rakes in from the ends of the earth, and that cannot be translated exactly into the modern language of pounds and guineas; things that are as expensive instruments for the cultivated rich to play a highly interesting and intellectual game with, were there—but nothing marvellous or unusual.

That Bassett had pursued this pastime with exceptional distinction occurred to nobody, imaginations being exercised to their utmost to discover the crimes or misfortunes that had suddenly cut him off from family and social existence. Sudden insanity, developed by excessive luxury or secret vice, or religious excitement, was a favourite surmise among many.

"It will all come out by and by—astounding revelations—sensational occurrences in the family of a prominent financier—we shall see what we shall see."

But nothing came out; no revelations, astounding or otherwise, were made; the match was broken off, the bridegroom elect was seen no more; time passed and the gossip died away. Even Airedale and Lulworth were for some time ignorant of their friend's exact locality. They only knew that he might be communicated with through the warden of that university settlement of which Blanche Ingram's was the female counterpart and associated complement. From this they drew their own conclusions. Other intimate friends knew nothing for many months.

"I take it that you know where he is, Blanche," Airedale said one day; "a man will tell a woman what he can tell no man. It's one of the paradoxes of feminine character, that a woman can never keep a secret, and

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yet can always keep the secret of the man who trusts her."

"Well done, Airedale! Act upon that henceforth, ponder upon it, remember that golden saying, treasure it as a priceless aphorism—women are always faithful to the trust men put in them."

"Only a certain brand of woman, the A & B, the Blanche Ingram, brand. But why on earth poor dear Bass runs to earth like this Heaven only knows."

"O, let the stricken deer go weep."

"He isn't a stricken deer; he's a man, with lots of fight in him. No; he's up to something. Writing a book, perhaps. That's Lulworth's notion. Lulworth is awfully cut up. He doesn't realize that the split had to come and the sooner the better. Sir Dan made a pretty poor figure at that trial, that building company fraud business, the other day. He didn't come quite clean out of it. The general opinion was that the set were all tarred with the same brush."

"It was only opinion; nothing was proved. Don't you remember how many men of undoubted honour and integrity have been bespattered by the mud of such proceedings, of which they have been the victims, and died of broken hearts since? And how many of them have pined away of mysterious diseases that no physician could diagnose?"

"Tough old Dan Bassett is not the man to be victimized—not in money matters—he won't pine away. When he dies, it will be of a broken bank or broken bones, or broken anything—but not of a broken heart. He'll die fighting. I have always had a sneaking admiration for the old fellow. There's a largeness, a dash and a daring about him. He's a grand old man—though his sense of honour is somewhat blunt. He belongs properly to an earlier stage of civilization; in Elizabethan days he would have made a heroic figure; he might have done anything—conquered and colonized Virginia, settled Irish diffi-

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culties once and for all, kept Spain under. He's a strong and capable man without too many scruples, the kind of man who does things that others only think. As it is, he's nothing but an overgrown merchant. There's no room for such big fellows in our crowded days."

"Not in South Africa, for instance?"

"Oh! out there empire-makers are three a penny. Cruel circumstance made the good Sir Dan a money-grubber too early in life. Had he been born to a competence—well! who knows?"

In the meantime Sir Daniel had grown more grim of visage and short of speech, but he was sedulous as ever in parliamentary and public duties, lavish as ever in charity and philanthropy; it might have been said of him that he paid the heaviest fire-insurance ever known of that kind.

Nearly a year had rolled by, and the prodigal had not returned from the far country in which he was presumably sharing husks with swine. Sir Daniel's birthday brought him Adrian's good wishes without address—they were promptly thrown into the fire. Christmas brought a gift for Muriel and letters for Phyllis and Sir Dan, also without address, and with absolutely no news of the writer, only the usual intimation that he might be communicated with through the warden of the settlement. Sir Dan solemnly and heartily cursed the settlement and all its works and committed the letters to the flames on that Christmas morning.

"As far as I can make out," he said to Phyllis, "these infernal settlements exist to extend university education to the slums. Now what on earth is the good of Latin and Greek to a carman or a dock labourer? and what are mathematics to a factory hand? They've got their free Board Schools, and a nice mess they make of them. Now I hear there are playing-schools to teach the slum brats how to make mud pies, and singing and dancing schools. Who the dickens is to do the world's work if

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the slum brats are taught to do nothing but amuse themselves? Miss Ingram was talking about a story-telling class; that poor deluded boy of mine was to tell stories to a roomful of dirty gutter-kids for a couple of hours on end. A man like Adrian, educated at Eton and Oxford, only to go and dry-nurse gutter-children and give their parents time to get drunk while he minds them! They teach 'em play-acting, somebody said, and painting and doll-dressing and clay-modelling. Oh, Lord! and all for nothing."

"Then people talk about the unemployed and wonder why you can't get these chaps to stick to any work," Neville added.

"Why the dickens should they?" growled Sir Daniel, "when they know that as many children as they choose to have will be cosseted and pampered at honest hard-working folks' expense? Everybody else must work, mind you, and work like blazes."

"Everybody but the working classes," Phyllis said; "I must say that I often wonder why the poor middle classes have none of these things done for them. How my grandfather pinched and struggled to send my uncles to school, and one of them to Cambridge, my mother has often told us. The girls had no schooling at all, they just picked up what my grandmother had time to teach them while she darned the stockings and made the puddings."

"Mother always liked to pile it on," Neville commented. "And your people came of some of the best blood in the three kingdoms," Sir Daniel added. "That's how people translate *noblesse oblige* in this country. After all I've done for that poor boy of mine, there he is, I suppose, serving out plum-pudding and roast beef in some stinking slum to a pack of ragged loafers this fine Christmas morning. A topsy-turvy world we live in now, by George!"

Oddly enough Lord Somersby was making the same remark at the same moment, because the son of the

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starving mason, Steven Bassett, was reigning in the seat of the Earls of Somersby, over their hereditary lands.

But it was not often that Sir Daniel allowed himself to speak of his prodigal, even in family privacy ; and it had soon become evident to all that Adrian's name was never to be mentioned before his father.

Nearly a twelvemonth after the breach between father and son, at the pleasant time of year when leaves are still fresh and silky, when oaks are golden brown, and birds in richest song, and early roses are beginning to blow, on a certain May afternoon, when such clarity was in the air that all the gilding on the Houses of Parliament shone distinctly in the sun, and the river flashed into diamonds wherever a ripple broke its smooth surface, a brilliant function took place upon Thames bank. The solemn beauty of the Abbey was more than ever impressive in that broad intense light ; it was hard to say whether it looked more like a poetic dream of the past, or an embodiment in stone of the faith and beauty of the Middle Ages, an eternal protest against the fever and fret and hard materialism of these meaner days. In its grey dignity and massive beauty it looked the newest and the most ancient building within sight of the river, all its solid splendour revealed in the May day brilliance, a perpetual surprise and stimulus to the imagination, a perpetual appeal to the romance and the passion of the past, which is dormant in so many minds.

Long lines of carriages were drawn up in the sunny precinct massed with humanity, on which Disraeli's bronze face looks down with that fine, half-cynical smile of his, that saw so much and yet so little. Here was a scene such as he loved, the cream of the rank and wealth and influence of the imperial city flowing in glittering equipages between solid banks of sightseers of every class ; a free pageant of London town marshalled and controlled by the omnipotent policeman's stalwart arm. Here was colour, and splendour of female attire,

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diamonds and plumes, flowers and trailing silks; here were ministers and ambassadors, peers and distinguished commoners; everywhere flowers and white favours, tossing manes and jingling bits. Here, as carriage after carriage filed slowly by, with fretting of impatient steeds, to the Abbey entrance, and powdered footmen with huge bouquets handed out their distinguished occupants, the ubiquitous street boy or leisured working man announced to the motley crowd starred with Whitsun holiday folk the name, rank, or personal peculiarities of the wedding guests. The baby who never fails at such functions screamed its wildest, the dog that is always lost or run over yapped sharply, the woman who invariably faints was borne senseless away; the usual merriment at the smallest provocation and the customary brisk exchange of good-tempered repartee were heard among the populace. Somebody steadily offered bananas for sale with varying success. This touched Sir Dan to the heart; it recalled his early struggles. He would have liked to buy a banana with a gold piece and say to the vendor, "I began with fewer bananas than you, and look at me *now!!!*" But he could only address himself to the task of kicking his way clear of ladies' trains and piloting Phyllis into the Abbey.

"She ain't awff a ripper!" was the public verdict, when a carriage with Mostyn bearings stopped and the bride alighted, stately, deliberate, and unembarrassed, and swept slowly over the crimson carpeting on her father's arm, with such beauty and distinction of bearing as quite overpowered and subordinated those elaborate superfluities of drapery and flowers, that make of the average bride a mere stack of millinery.

But this beautiful and stately Isobel Mostyn was not the lovely, laughing girl who sat with her young and handsome lover in the summer shade by the water at Ranelagh nearly a year ago. Something was gone for ever from the face, which still kept the old, irresistible

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magnetism ; the last remnant of the child had faded, the spontaneous gaiety of youth evaporated, the grace of maidenhood set, in a commanding maturity. Nor was this all ; a nameless, haunting something was lost, and the whole set of feature was altered. Airedale thought she had hardened.

As she passed over the crimson felt, a delicate flush in her cheek and no tremor in the immense bunch of flower trails she carried, amid a buzz of murmured and outspoken admiration, a young workman, whose dark-eyed gaze had enveloped her from the moment she appeared, raised himself by a lamp-post waist high above the crowd with one hand, and dexterously threw her a paper of Niphetos roses over the heads of the people with the other. The roses struck the bride's shoulder, two of the beautifully cut, wax-like flowers fell at her feet so that she passed over them, and the rest lodged in the ample folds of the long train held by little boys in white satin and plumed hats. She showed neither by movement nor glance any consciousness of this rather daring tribute, but passed serenely into the dim, sun-shot gloom of the Abbey, whither the young workman's absorbed gaze followed her as he slipped from his post, all unconscious of the eyes directed upon himself. The mellow boom of the organ rolled out fitfully from the minster, like a wave breaking in foam of silver-sweet voices, and fell and was lost in the hum of voices and roar of traffic without.

The crowd swayed and changed, but remained substantially the same ; a splendidly made policeman on a lovely charger, of which he seemed an organic part, moved about with brief words and gestures of command, at which the long strings of vehicles were rearranged ; pigeons preened themselves and sunned their breasts on buttress and pinnacle ; saints and kings looked in effigy on the transient pageant below ; the bronze Disraeli's fine and enigmatic smile measured and sifted the waiting crowd ; twice the chimes sang the dirge of the dead

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quarters ; and the young man who had thrown the roses waited in untiring patience in the sun. Then at last there was a stir and murmur of expectation ; down from some immeasurable height of golden music fell a sweet tumult of joyous bells, deep-mouthed, mellow and tremulous, hurrying in ordered chase one after the other, up and down and to and fro, now lower, now louder, in narrowing sweep and broadening sway, up a measureless steep of melody and down again, with sonorous clash and dulcet jar. Out from the opening doors thundered the pealing triumph of the organ, in the exultant bridal music from Lohengrin, and the guests began to issue in their order from the grey gloom of the pointed aisles.

A cabinet minister is not married every day or always in that august and triply consecrated sanctuary. So Lady Kilmeny thought, when she issued in great splendour of family jewels and rich brocade, with a quietly happy consciousness that her hair was of a colour both probable and becoming, and that Biddy was on her best behaviour and the only unmarried daughter now remaining of the House of Mostyn. After all, everything was probably for the best ; the aged duke, who had been so kind and pleasant to Isobel, and whose silvery locks and venerable aspect had greatly enhanced the splendour of the ceremony, was evidently not long for this world. Lady Kilmeny had, while moving down the aisle upon his arm, by one skilful and timely turn of the wrist, herself saved him from a bad fall, when he had tottered beyond power of self-recovery, stumbling to avoid trampling on a sweeping train. Isobel would make, or at least look, an ideal duchess. While the marquis—well, perhaps when he was a duke the marquis would be nicer. Poor dear Adrian Bassett would never have done for Isobel ; a dear boy and delightful son-in-law, but hardly up to the level of her daughter, and much too near Belle in age. Aynesworth was something for her to lean upon ; love-matches so often turn out badly ; lovers expect too

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much of one another ; besides, an emotional wedding was such a trying thing—impossible for any known powder or beauty bloom to stand such a trial. If Aire-dale would only make a good match, and Augusta definitely give up play—but one should be thankful for solid and indubitable mercies—Isobel had gone through the ceremony without a quiver ; all things seemed possible ; even Blanche might marry a bishop some future day, or she might begin with a dean and finally work up to the episcopal dignity. Aynesworth's influence was so enormous, and he was not bald, only grey.

The marquis in sober truth made as fine a figure as mortal man can under the exacting circumstances of bridal pomp, which accentuates the incongruity between civilized male and female attire, the bride staggering under mountains of frippery and trailing behind her yards of heavy and expensive clothing, from the billowy folds and surging superfluities of which, a close-cropped figure in sad-coloured woollen clothes, devoid of ornament or grace, from time to time emerges to give spectators assurance of the harmless but entirely necessary bridegroom. He was a tall man, well featured and of fine presence, and bore himself with that unconscious consciousness of power and eminence often acquired by those whose business it is to rule in high places. The beauty and grace of the slender figure, half lost in bridal array at his side, seemed but the fit complement of his own severe stateliness. He led her into the sunshine and publicity with a studied deference, in which there was more pride than humility, and, with a grave smile, called her attention to something in the crowd. The sunlight brought up the silver in his dark, cropped hair and with unsparing candour showed every line on his close-shaven face. It was a face familiar to every one—by frequent sight, by caricature, by all kinds of legitimate portraiture—and yet in such moments as these the most familiar faces throw off the mask of daily habit

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and discover fresh qualities. The young workman who had thrown the roses, watching him intently, noticed the piercing glance, square jaw, and firm mouth. To him it seemed a hard mouth with possibilities of cruelty; he traced the record of a past, from which few worldly experiences were absent, on the face.

His eyes dilated at these thoughts and observations, and bent themselves more intently upon the bride, whose veil was worn in the prevailing mode off the face, leaving the faintly flushed features and deep violet eyes so fully exposed in the dazzling light that not the quiver of an eyelash could escape observation. He noticed that in spite of the proud lift of the head, steady and direct gaze, and smiling lips, tears hardly held back were welling to the eyes, and the weariness of restraint was over all the features. Just then, amid all the melodious tumult of the bells and organ music surging over the murmur and buzz of the crowd, Isobel looked up straight into the dark and lustrous eyes of the young workman. There was an electric flash, a spasm of terror and pain on the blanching features of the bride, a strangely appealing look like a dumb cry for mercy, and Aynesworth felt a tightening clutch on his arm and the sudden close pressure of Isobel's figure to his side. It was but a moment before the young man, who had turned deathly pale, slipped into the crowd and was lost to sight.

"My dear child," Aynesworth muttered in low staccato tones; he was obliged to pause for a second, the whole weight of her figure suddenly swaying on his arm; "for Heaven's sake hold up. What on earth is it?"

"Only a false step," she said, recovering poise, but not colour, and trembling a little all over. "It's, it's a little hot to-day, Reginald."

"Nonsense, dear, there's nothing to faint about," he remonstrated, handing her into the carriage and cleverly folding her voluminous train well out of the way before stepping in by her side.

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"Even you don't know everything," she returned, resenting the secure and proprietary tone that marked the transition from deferential suppliant to easily confident overlord.

"What do I not know, Belle?" he asked sharply, with a quick keen glance at the blanched face by his side.

"What it is to move about in a court train, with lace curtains on one's head and half a ton of vegetation in one's hand, you extremely unsympathetic person."

CHAPTER II

THE MINISTER'S HONEYMOON

THE young workman waited till the last wedding guest had left the Abbey, and the thinning crowd flowing outward made it possible to saunter unobserved down the long lofty aisles, whence the organ thunder had died away and the joyous clangour of the wedding bells was shut out, with the broad blaze of sunshine and perpetual buzz and motion of the city.

The silence and soft gloom of the vast echoing interior, empty but for a few scattered stragglers hardly noticeable, was like a benediction after the brilliance and turmoil outside. The young man was glad of the deep peace and sanctity of the place, and moved slowly to the altar over the path of the wedding guests, with a look as of one who prayed and was refreshed in soul. Very slowly he moved, sometimes stopping, absorbed in thought or emotion, sometimes looking up at the beautiful ar-cading of the ambulatory and lovely spring of the vaulted roof, as if gathering strength and consolation, either from the serene loveliness of the building or from the associations it called up of the men of distant ages and different ideals: those pillared arches and groined vaults had looked upon, and of the tragedies and splendours enacted beneath them in far-off days; thoughts marvellously uplifting, we scarcely know why, any more than we know why the passing pageant of setting suns and splendour of storm-girt mountains is uplifting.

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Petals of fading roses and azaleas, fallen stars of jasmine, and broken fronds of maidenhair marked the path of the marriage company; the young man's dark eyes followed these as if looking for something, till he reached the spot where the bride must have stood and knelt during the greater part of the ceremony; and there, out of reach of passing footsteps, as if rolled from the massive folds of the satin train, lay one of the roses he had thrown, unfaded, pure, and perfect in its delicate chiselling.

He lifted the cast-away flower as one might lift a fallen child, and inhaled its fresh and stimulating scent. Then darkness fell upon him, the solid masonry of pier and arch and vaulted roof swam and melted into hoary gloom pierced by sunshafts, that seemed less insubstantial than the fretted stonework through which they shot their tremulous gold. He stood rigid, with fixed and sightless eyes, as if in cataleptic trance, conscious of the tender yet piercing fragrance of the white rose and conscious of her who had borne it through the marriage rite and of nothing more, for a measurable space, till some louder voice or footfall, waking innumerable echoes along the aisles, reached his brain, and arch and column and fretted canopy slowly emerged from shadows into that dream-like actuality which is their normal seeming.

The approach of a Whitsuntide party, shepherded by a voluble verger with the aspect of a dissipated bishop, shattered the magic of time and place with a rough summons to present banality. The young workman, his cherished rose concealed, turned to other sacred solitudes, whence he was chased again and again by sight-seers, single and in battalions, till, driven from tomb to shrine and from shrine to tomb, he took refuge in the open air and walked slowly to Parliament Street, where he caught an omnibus. Scaling the moving tower, he was borne slowly along on the crest of the tide of traffic, till within easy reach of Grosvenor Square. Then he dropped and strolled over hot pavements to Lord Kilmeny's house,

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where long lines of carriages indicated the wedding reception. Sauntering along and edging a slow passage through the crowd, he reached a vantage point commanding the entrance as nearly as policemen permitted, and again waited patiently, intent upon the announcements of closer observers as to what was forward within the house. He was soon rewarded by a rush following a cry of "Here she comes!" and a movement among the carriages and the closer attention of the footmen ranged on the steps.

Pulling his hat over his eyes and turning up his coat collar, he stepped upon a coping-stone and looked. Hall and balcony were crowded with smiling faces ready to give the bridal pair a send-off. At the top of the steps the bridegroom waited with the bored and patient weariness of one who expects speedy deliverance, bland and courteous under farewells and congratulations. Behind him Lismore and a laughing bridesmaid, both obviously bent on mischief and provided with rice and slippers, bided their time, while the bride hurriedly passed on her father's arm through dividing groups in the hall and down the steps to the carriage.

The young workman observed that she was veiled, and a closer inspection revealed a carefully powdered, agitated face and eyes marked too certainly by crying such as no make-up could efface. Lord Kilmeny, his grey and partially bald head bare to the hot sun, was handing her into the carriage, Aynesworth slowly following, when she suddenly turned, threw her arms round her father's neck, and clung to him with the passionate helplessness of a child; the man in the crowd thought he heard sobbing, but that must have been pure fancy. A hard impatience gathered on Aynesworth's face and tightened his mouth. Lord Kilmeny was perceptibly distressed; he murmured something to his daughter while he tried to raise the head pressed with childish vehemence into his breast; but some seconds passed before he could free

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himself from the clinging figure of poor Isobel, and, after one last kind kiss, place her in the carriage, where she quickly lowered the blind. Then the marquis, putting on the hat he had been holding so long with an impatient bang, hastily shook hands with his father-in-law and got in quickly, just in time to escape a well-aimed slipper, which, to the deep contentment of the spectators, knocked a majestic and imperturbable footman's hat off his powdered head, exposing him to the jeers of the populace, while showers of rice and slippers were thrown with liberal impartiality over the whole equipage—fretting horses, magnificent servants, bride and bridegroom.

The workman looked with steadfast and wistful interest till the last spiky glitter of the wheels was lost, then dropped to the pavement, turned and went eastward, with a torment of rhythmic bells swinging through his head and the white brilliance of women's bridal clothes troubling his eyes.

The usual things had been done at the reception; the young marchioness, pale but composed beneath white orange blossom and gleaming myrtle, had received congratulations and presentations with smiling charm and unstudied grace, making due response, unmoved by badi-nage, and ready with quick repartee. She had known how to choose a time to glide unobserved from the reception rooms to change from bridal to travelling dress, followed at a beckoning glance by Blanche.

But when she reached her room, dismissing her maid, she threw herself into Blanche's arms, all encumbered with wedding finery as she was, and let her pent-up passion have vent.

"Blanche, Blanche!" she cried; "how could he? How dared he? It was cruel; it was brutal!"

Blanche let her sob her heart out, while she quietly removed her wreath and veil.

"I hate him," the new-made marchioness said with

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calm concentration, when at last she lifted her head and began to tear off the rest of the bridal dress, flinging silver and pearl-embroidered draperies broadcast from her, as if there were some clinging Nessus venom in them. "Why did you let him come? Did you know he was there? Why didn't you warn me? Aynesworth—Aynesworth—must have recognized him. And Aynesworth is—a fiend."

"How should Lord Aynesworth recognize him, Belle? Even Airedale passed him in the open street the first time they met—the beard is such a complete disguise. Yet Airedale expected to see a bearded man in working-man's dress."

"But you recognized him to-day, Blanche?"

"Yes—but then—I—I'm a woman—and we observe little things—looks—manners—more closely than men. Besides, I had seen him before in his disguise."

"Oh! Blanche, what does it mean? I know that you know all about him. What is he doing? and why does he do it? Airedale won't say a word. Blanche, honey, tell me, tell me all about him—do, darling, do tell me."

She began to sob again, but with less vehemence, while Blanche diligently collected and put upon her the things the maid had laid ready to hand.

"Not now," she said, "you'll lose your train. He's all right, Belle, and it was only natural that an old friend——"

"Friend? Oh! Blanche, Blanche!"

"An old friend would like to see you turned off. I don't suppose he thought of being recognized—in that crowd too. Come, Belle, you can't go out like this. For pity's sake bathe your face. Let me call the woman in. She told me she had the make-up ready. See what a practical bridesmaid you have. Look here, you've cried over my finery to that extent, you horrid thing!"

Aynesworth was furious at this public exhibition of feeling.

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"I couldn't have believed it of you, Isobel," he said as they drove off. "I always thought you superior to that kind of thing."

"Well, then, now you know I'm not," was the quick, subacid reply. "You've just taken me for better and for worse, and the worse has come rather quickly, that's all. Allow me to offer my sincere condolence. It's rough upon you, I confess, very rough."

"My *dear* girl," he returned, with veiled impatience, "all that you do or say has an irresistible charm—even your disconcerting little bursts of childishness. And of course the moment was trying, most trying to an affectionate nature like yours. But you really must pull yourself together and keep these ardent and—ah—engaging emotions of yours in abeyance. Remember that experiences of a most trying nature still await you."

"My dear Reginald, I am not the House of Commons," she interrupted, with gentle smiling remonstrance, "and firmly but respectfully decline to be lectured."

"True. But you are the Marchioness of Aynesworth," he said impressively.

"Only by courtesy. In reality I'm a commoner. I'm one of the sovereign people, and claim their sublime and inalienable privilege to rise in revolt against bloated aristocrats, against lectures, against musts—please understand that the courtesy Marchioness of Aynesworth doesn't intend to be musted with any musts whatever—in short, she revolts solidly and emphatically against everything."

"Hear, hear! Now that's a finer spirit. That's your true Eracles vein," he said, trying to take her hand, but desisting when he found she avoided it, to her profound pleasure and gratitude.

"It's my manifesto," she corrected, with reckless gaiety. "When people set out together on a voyage for life, it's just as well that they should begin by thoroughly understanding one another's policy."

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"Just as well," he agreed cheerfully; "but you've not heard mine yet. That can wait till to-morrow," he added, with a subtle smile, as they drove into the terminus and the bustle of getting out and taking a place in the special Pullman car reserved for them and their following had to be encountered.

The car was decorated in their honour and arranged with the sumptuous comfort exacted by modern luxury. The marchioness cast an approving glance upon the deep springy chairs and fresh upholstery of silken tapestry; upon the cosy tables, laden with current literature, writing materials, and the news of the afternoon; upon sun-blinds and ventilators and rich profusion of flowers, and glanced through at the retiring and dining saloons equally well appointed, observing that she was glad the Company had risen to the occasion.

Very soon the smoky outskirts of the giant city were behind them, and the glorious pageant of open country in all its soft May brilliance flashed by; deep meadows brimming with buttercup gold and overshadowed by freshest verdure of elm and birch and lime with bronzy gold of oaks; upland pastures steeped in sunshine, gay with the vernal dance of cowslips and cheerful with browsing cattle and full-fleeced sheep; red-roofed farms with barn and granary half buried in orchard and lilac bloom; cottages nestling in the shadow of leafy trees, and chestnuts white with fairy turrets of blossom; copses ringing with bird music and carpeted with blue sheets of hyacinth and the delicate yellow of fast-fading primroses; here and there a little town, with church tower and sunny street and a mill on the outskirts; here and there a stately hall, sentinelled by secular oaks and silken-leaved limes; here a village with church spire and yews black against the May verdure, and a babbling stream shadowed by willows silvering in the soft breeze, and thorns white with May blossom; and here a sudden plunge into the blackness and sulphur breath of a

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tunnel, to emerge into a sunnier, sweeter country at the end.

The marquis piled books and magazines within reach of his bride, offered her tea, ices, fruit, cigarettes, and bon-bons, but, to her deep gratitude, neither caresses nor tender speeches. These duties accomplished, he requested permission to devote himself to a pile of correspondence at the far end of the saloon, and to this purpose summoned a young secretary of blithe and gallant bearing, with whom he worked steadily for an hour and a half.

Isobel, lounging in her deep chair, bastioned with magazines and flowers, looked idly at the sunny green country flying past the windows and remembered that Adrian had thought of being private secretary to Aynesworth, while she pulled a bunch of Niphetos roses to pieces. The swift rush of the train over the glimmering rails seemed to bear her farther and farther from the sweetness and sorrow of the past ; her youth and girlhood lay far and ever farther behind ; soon she hoped to forget Isobel Mostyn and her little tragedies and heartbreaks, and absorb herself entirely in the brilliant destinies of Isobel, Marchioness of Aynesworth and probable Duchess of Midshire.

She looked across the car, which was shaded by thick silk blinds on its sunny side, at Aynesworth's still figure, fine head, and face full of power and intellect, and tried to take pride in the possession of such a man, and hoped that some warmer, more intimate feeling might arise between them in time. He looked up under the magnetism of her wistful glance ; his keen eyes softened, he smiled, nodded, and buried himself again in the correspondence before him, murmuring fragmentary instructions to the diligent young secretary, whose pen travelled rapidly over the paper at his side.

A delicious softness had stolen into the clear sky ; long purple shadows lay athwart sun-steeped uplands and fringed glowing copses, whence the song of blackbird

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and thrush came mellow and more poignant, when at last the secretary gathered up a sheaf of papers and withdrew, leaving Aynsworth still musing with contracted brows over a note-book, in which from time to time he made an entry.

Isobel, looking out of her window, breathing fragrant air and absorbed in the homesick reverie natural to the hour, had completely forgotten him, when, suddenly without any preamble, he asked in sharp staccato accents, "Why did you ask Bassett to the wedding?"

She started so violently from her reverie that a Nineteenth Century slipped from her knee with a thud, and a wave of deepest crimson rushed over her startled face, leaving it ashen pale.

"I asked no one to the wedding," she replied coldly, with quick recovery; "that was my mother's part."

"But you knew he would be there?" he added, crossing over to her window and taking his stand near.

"Was he there?" she asked, looking up with a daring assumption of innocence. "The list will be in the Morning Post to-morrow, no doubt."

He looked at her long and silently with a piercing scrutiny that roused the spirit of battle within her.

"I hope you detect no very serious flaw in my poor features," she said at last, with ominous suavity.

"Only this, that the name of Bassett dyes them deep crimson," he replied in a steely voice.

"In that case your wisdom would be to avoid mentioning the name. A deeper wisdom would be to accept the crimson. It isn't a bad colour when it's not chronic."

"No man's name should change the colour of a wife's face, Isobel—certainly not of my wife's. Every shade of a woman's face, every fibre of her being, is her husband's by right."

"By what right, may I ask?" she demanded haughtily, anger clouding the clear violet of her gaze. "Pray be reasonable, Reginald, and recognize that you have mar-

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ried an average human being, who comes of a fighting race and has no intention of being snubbed and brow-beaten. If I changed colour at the sudden mention of a man whom I regarded for many months as my affianced husband, and whom I loved very deeply with a girl's devotion, is it altogether so wonderful ? ”

“ It's confoundedly unpleasant and most insulting to the man whose name you bear.”

“ You gave the name with full knowledge, Reginald. I hid nothing from you. I told you I had no love to give, and you said you would be content with friendship. I have no remembrance of the declaration of any ardent passion on your side either. You had drained the fullness of life long ago in youth, I heard—were a little weary and sought the repose of domestic affection and tranquil duties. You had quite done with the purple and poetry of passion. If I remember rightly, it was agreed that we should dispense with sentiment and meet as man and woman of the world, comrades, each asking and giving what there was to give and nothing more, and never forgetting that there were pages in the life of each marked with indelible records. We were to be loyal comrades and firm friends, we hoped, in future. Was it so ? ”

“ Your memory,” he replied slowly, “ is exact, rather cruelly exact, perhaps. Still, one is human ; still, there was, if I'm not mistaken, no licence claimed or given to reopen those closed pages or brood over records of things best forgotten.”

“ Certainly there was not. Therefore, why do you ? ”

“ My dear Lady Aynsworth, permit me to remind you that I too come of a fighting race, and that for some years past I have exercised authority——”

“ Pray continue to do so then,” she retorted cheerfully, with a quick change of manner. “ Tell them to draw up those blinds and let in the sunset, and just ask Reed to bring me a scarf, will you ? ”

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"Do you know," he said, thoughtfully studying her defiant, brightly smiling face, "that you are rather refreshing? These little naughtinesses are by no means unbecoming to your blonde type."

She thought she had successfully put him down, and was drinking delight of victory when he returned from fulfilling her behests, took a chair near her, and pointed out things of interest in the flying champaign, and discussed the next stopping-place with submissive but misleading gentleness.

"Where is Adrian Bassett?" he asked then on a sudden, and the tell-tale flush returned with a look of pain to her bright face.

"Heaven knows," she replied indifferently; "and so, I believe, does Airedale, also Blanche Ingram."

"I suppose—as everybody says—that he *was* rather a bad lot—eh?"

"Who is everybody?" she asked, with a dreamy glance at an amethystine haze indicating an approaching town.

"Isobel, what was the true cause of the double quarrel with you and with his father?" he continued. "I felt at the time that there was something behind, some secret of his, that I had then scarcely the right to penetrate. But now it is different; we can have no secrets from each other."

"There is no secret, Reginald, none that I ever heard," she replied, with an air of unmistakable sincerity. "I told you all. He thought his father's ways of doing business wrong and refused to act with him unless they were altered. Sir Dan naturally thought he knew best, and was furious and told him to go and fight for himself. It is obvious that I claimed my release on hearing this—that was, unless he would make it up with his father. That he refused to do; naturally, it was a point of honour with him. There was no smallest chance of his being able to marry at all for years, much less to

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offer me any position at all suitable. The parting was obvious."

"To the meanest capacity," the marquis added in an equivocal tone. "But why did Bassett disappear?" he presently added. "I could have given him a lift, I could have made use of him. And not I alone. His friends were many and influential. There was stuff in him. That he should have gone under like this, so suddenly and totally, is one of the inscrutable mysteries of human character. There must have been something behind. Do you see that darkness yonder and the flames beginning to glow in the dusk? That is Michester. Chillingly Place lies beyond."

She was glad to have something to look fixedly at and so hide the hot tears springing to her eyes; he was silent, absorbed in unravelling the tangled complexities in the character of his new-wed wife. The train slackened speed, the glories of a May sunset glowed with dimmed and murky splendour, not without added impressiveness, through the heavy smoke pall that canopied the great midland town, and they rolled into the lighted station, a part of which was garlanded in their honour, and stepped out on the platform. Here they were received with an almost royal state not unwelcome to the bride, who accepted the presentation bouquet with a smiling charm and joyous grace that won all hearts, according to the local papers.

Nor was the bridegroom wholly indifferent to the cheers of the crowd and addresses from local magnates, to the pealing bells, flags, triumphant arches and other demonstrations, along their route through the streets of the town, and suburbs, and villages on the nine-mile drive to Chillingly Place, which seemed to Isobel all lilac scent, afterglow, demonstrative crowd, and wedding bells.

And when the torchlight procession of tenantry and labourers, with a troop of yeomanry in which Aynsworth held a commission, appeared at a bend of the hilly road

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and the frightened horses were taken from the carriage and their place supplied by sturdy village youths, the new marchioness was much pleased. And when the splendid façade of Chillingly Place glowed in long lines of light on the hill above the winding river, and the bridge gleamed out in many arches above the glimmering water, whence lamp-hung trees marked the zigzag road up to the Duke of Midshire's most magnificent home, over which as they approached sheaves of rockets poured rubies and emeralds, while coloured fires showed every detail of tower and battlement, bringing into sudden clearness the fine trees and green stretches of the Park around—a sense of the rounded completeness of life filled Isobel's heart, and she drew a deep sigh of content. No life could be complete for her without splendour of environment, and that, in some degree and in spite of poverty, had always been hers.

"Chillingly shows well from this point," Aynesworth said. "You get the whole range of it, with the octagon tower behind above that wooded rise. 'Tisn't a bad old place—for a time, to be born in or die in. Had I been able to command a moon for you, you should not have seen it first in this unreal stage-effect light."

"Not stage-effect—magic—poetic—fairy-like," She smiled with some approach to affection, appreciating the delicacy of intention. "But oh! what a strain to live up to such a place as this."

Higher and higher they wound with slackened pace up the road in the flickering lights, her growing contentment shining in her eyes and tinting her velvety cheek. And presently on rounding a corner they plunged into lantern-lit dusk under giant oaks, when the gay tumult of wedding bells rocking the village tower below was caught away on a swelling breeze, and into the sudden, May-scented silence pealed the long, clear, passionate warble of a solitary nightingale and ceased.

The young marchioness's heart fainted within her; the

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blood fled from her glowing lips and cheeks ; she sank as far back in the carriage as possible to hide a shower of blinding tears from her husband ; and the wedding bells surged back again and broke with precipitate, confused melody upon the quivering air.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN WHO THREW THE ROSES

ON that Whitsun night the same dream* visited the slumbers of a beautiful young marchioness, lulled by the song of nightingales and scent of lilac and lily of the valley, under a magnificent roof that had sheltered kings, and those of a tired working man in a close and noisy street of mean and overcrowded houses, where children woke and wailed, and drunkards cursed and rioted, in the earlier hours; where windows opened with difficulty, and were often closed to exclude fouler air than that within.

Both dreamed of a sunny afternoon in early summer, of a grassy slope, overshadowed by a broad-armed beech and dappled with wild flowers, where lay a sleeping youth, with a face of clear-cut intelligence and the beauty of a Greek marble, whose eyes opened to see two young and comely women carrying flowers, one grave and stately, the other with the golden nimbus and loveliness of an angel. Rose and honeysuckle scented that green and sunny place; clear jewel-flames burnt in the fresh translucence of the beech leaves; the charmed air was full of the gladness that has innocence at heart, and of the deep and mystic enchantments of highest poetry. And woven closely in the texture of that fair, unforgetten dream, like the brocading of rich silk stuffs, was the wonder and sudden rapture of newly kindled love. Yet the dream left in the lady's heart a deep shudder, and in the day-labourer's a heavy sigh, and each in waking

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tried to put it away like an evil thing ; the lady by absorbing herself in the busy festivities and easy pomps that constituted her daily life, the working man banishing the same poetic memory by keeping his mind fixed on the strenuous bodily labour that was his portion.

All day long, in all weathers, he sat on the driving-perch of a great covered van, steering a pair of splendid draught horses, with shining coats and flowing manes, through the intricacies of London street traffic, watchful of notices to stop in windows, much harried by police for stopping where traffic was thick ; now avoiding this and narrowly shaved by that ; now pulling up in time to miss a daring cyclist dashing under the horses' noses, and incurring the wrath of drivers in the rear ; now grazed in his lumbering course by an impatient hansom ; now just shaved by a motor grunting past with lawless velocity ; now hung up at narrow turnings and considering how to stop at impossible places ; now consulting the waybill as it was pencilled up inside the van, or impressed upon memory. Then, when the way was clearer, the man hanging by the rope behind would exchange pleasantries, or narrate items of personal experience, or suggest drinks at favourite bars, or even tender fragments of world-wisdom and strictly private views of human life. Again the horses would be pulled up, and the driver would take a flying leap to the pavement, while his mate swung himself from the tail-board, when more or less heaving and hoisting of trunks and packages great and small ensued, and was followed by the reception of shillings and pence and the inscription of transactions on paper held against jambs and door-posts. Then an acrobatic leap back to the high driving-perch, a whip-crack, a straining of powerful haunches and feathered fetlocks—and on again, in sun or storm, with many an incident of epic interest, and passage of romantic peril or perplexity, and many an interlude of lively word-fence, more trenchant than skilful, in the latest cockney dialect

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with injured or injuring fellow-drivers on the way. Plenty to think about and plenty to interest in this daily round, without brooding upon forbidden joys and magic dreams; and yet this car-driver's ears still rang with wedding bells and fragments of stilled song, and sweet words spoken in a flute-sweet voice on sweeter occasion than could ever be again.

"It's a pity, though," the manager at one of the offices of the great carrying company was saying on the following Saturday night; "that chap is one of our best hands, steady as old time. Never one complaint in all the five months."

"Too good to be true," his colleague replied. "Ever noticed his hands? or the way he walks? Something behind."

"Well, well," the manager said, "if the boss will have it so, he must; but you don't get a steady hand like that every day; he was one of the few who turned up fresh as paint after bank holiday. 'Pass him in.'"

The office door opened and the workman, who had thrown the roses at the cabinet minister's wedding, stepped in and came up to the desk to receive his week's wage, which he counted before pocketing, with a cheerful "Thank you, sir, and good night," as he turned away to give place to the next man.

"Stop," said the manager, showing him a well-known evening paper, blue-pencilled at an article, one of a series under the general heading, "From the Depths"—"look at this; do you know it?"

The workman looked. "The Evening Banner, yes. It's one of the best-known," he replied; "as good a ha'peth of news as you'll get anywhere."

"As good a penneth of lies and detraction," retorted the manager. "Look at this—about cracking men's sinews and wrenching their joints to save using machinery and then turning 'em off and leaving 'em to rot in the street. 'The Story of Twisted Joe,' eh! That means

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us. Twisted Joe is Jacob Parkins, who jumped foul from the box when half-seas over, and nearly ruined a pair of our best roans for us."

"Really, sir? The story goes that the roans took fright just as Parkins, a sober man, was about to jump, and started and threw him on the kerb."

"Ah! that's how you put it in your precious article. That's your writing, we know the style, and you cribbed it all from Cayley and Co."

"The article is anonymous, sir. But supposing I did write it, what then?"

"What then? D'ye call it honest and above board to tell tales of the house whose bread you eat?"

"I earn all the bread I eat—at the risk of life and limb. And whoever wrote that article mentioned no name and presumably intended no malice. But if, as you say, Cayley and Co. do these things, how can it harm them to have it pointed out?"

"What? You pillory the men whose bread you eat? prejudice them in the eyes of the public?"

"They are not pilloried—except in the secrecy of their own consciences. If they fear discovery and prejudice, the remedy is in their own hands. It is well for them to know what is thought of such malpractices and injustices as are alluded to; it is well for them to be touched in conscience, surely. Much neglect and carelessness of workpeople's safety is caused by want of thought and knowledge; employers don't realize their responsibilities, or even know often what is done by their subordinates. It is the business of the Press to throw light on these things."

"In short, Cayley and Co. ought to be deeply grateful and pass you a vote of thanks, eh? I've met many a cool hand before, young man, but I'm bound to say you break the record for cheek. You think I don't know your brand, don't recognize the Trade Union twang, the Hyde Park cart oratory, eh? Men of your kidney are

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common enough, and it's they who lead genuine working men into all sorts of suicidal tomfoolery. You're no working man—look at your hands, hark to your fine accent and finicking words—you're a blooming newspaper sneak, some toff down on his luck, and come to spy on us and make copy out of us. And a precious mean thing to do—to my mind."

The man coloured ; he looked down and then up, with a quiet and steady gaze in which there was neither defiance nor shame. "I was not brought up as a working man, it is true," he replied ; "but my father was, and his father before him, and I certainly am, as you say, down on my luck. Still, I am a genuine working man and have nothing but my weekly wages to live upon. I wrote that article and was paid for it ; I am not the only working man who writes for the Press. I am sorry to have hurt the firm's feelings ; but if the cap fits them—a thing I have never said—why, let them look into it and the sooner the better."

"Well, I'm blest if you haven't a cheek !" cried the manager aghast, "and don't jolly well put the top hat on the whole bally show ! All right, governor. I'll give your compliments to the firm and tell 'em how bad you feel about their feelings and say good night to you. Oh ! and you needn't trouble to call again. The firm wouldn't have you risk your precious life in their vans—not—not—for a million a minute—they are that tender-hearted over their hands, are Cayley's."

"I have had nothing personally to complain of while in their service, sir," the man replied ; "and I meant no cheek to you," he said, with a little smile. "Good night."

"Good night, duke. I say, Barnes," he confided to his subordinate when the carman was gone, "I've always had a sneaking kindness for that chap, cheek and all. You bet, he's a slum novelist. He'll put you and me into his next. We shall see ourselves in print, eh ?"

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"A sixpenny shocker," Barnes added, with a wide grin ; "fourpence ha'peny with the discount off. Done up in blue and red, with a picture of our noble selves on the cover, and took home to the missus for a Christmas present. My aunt !"

"What's up, mate ?" the tail-board man asked the discharged hand, when the latter came out into the yard. "What 'was all the jaw about—a shove-up for you ?"

"Not much. Sacked. Tell Ned when you see him. Shall you turn up at the Club to-morrow, Tom ?"

"To-morrow night, likely enough. Got to take the missus and the kids out in the afternoon. So you're sacked ? Well, I *am* blowed ! No use for first-rate goods in this shop, Jack."

"Bad news for you, then. Good night."

Why they called him Jack he knew no more than they ; but the name once given stuck. Working men are always called Jack, unless they are named Bill, or Ned, or Bert, or Tom, or have some distinctive title, such as "The Buster" ; but their proper names seldom achieve two syllables in the vernacular, whatever they are on the register ; but no one knows why.

Many vexatious thoughts rolled through the discharged driver's brain while he pursued his solitary way homewards, and, climbing a steep, unwashed stair, and threading passages furnished chiefly with smells and sounds of family dissension, turned the key of his own door, and entered a clean and neat little room, dimly lighted by the street gas. It contained a gas cooking-stove, cheap muslin curtains, two plain wooden arm-chairs, an iron bedstead, the bedding covered by a bright striped rug of silk waste, a white-wood table, a few varnished deal shelves crammed with books, and some cheap reproductions of good pictures. A small screen concealed various homely necessities in a corner, a cupboard by the fireplace held food and some cups and plates, a small chest with a lock presumably supplied the place of ward-

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robe and furnished an additional table or seat at need. A geranium strove manfully to support life on the windowsill, where a small box of mignonette was about to begin a like struggle; the window commanded no better prospect than similar windows set in smutty brick opposite, a narrow and dingy road a few stories below, and, above the chimney stacks, a strip of dust-dimmed sky whence a star was faintly shining.

Jack lighted the stove, put sausages in one compartment and new potatoes in another, slipped out to a water-tap on the landing and washed a lettuce bought on the way home; first trimmed, then lighted, a mineral-oil lamp, and then, having washed and brushed his hair, sat down in shirt sleeves and read, till savoury odours and cheerful sputters gave token that dinner was ready to serve.

The serving was neither long nor complicated, yet not without order and neatness; the lettuce, garnished with radishes, was even made an ornamental feature in the centre of the coarse clean cloth, and contemplated with evident pleasure.

The last sausage was about to disappear and the cheerful report of a bottled-beer cork had been succeeded by the gurgling outflow of pale amber crowned with yellow foam, when a knock sounded on the door panel; and, on being repeated, was answered by a loud, "Come in!"

"By George!" cried the visitor, having entered and looked round the room, taking in every detail in silent amazement from behind the occupant, whose back was towards the door, "what an epicurean!"

"Hullo!" cried Jack, starting up and turning with outstretched hands, "so you've unearthed me at last, confound you!" I say, Aireuale, I'm awfully glad to see you, but I wish to goodness you hadn't come."

"You fraud," Airedale growled hoarsely because of something in his throat. "Look here, Bass, if you were to set up a pillar on Salisbury Plain or Snowdon like old Simeon, I'm blest if you wouldn't have the thing cushioned

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and done up in the best style, and send your rags to the wash every day. These diggings are palatial."

"No jeering at honest poverty, Jim. Never cast scorn upon the British workman, the pillar of the State. Sit down, old chap, and have half a sausage and a luke-warm potato—all there is left. It is snug, isn't it? I'm not the stuff ascetics are made of, I'm afraid. Too fond of comfort."

"Comfort? Oh, Lord! But, without any humbug, the thing is—well—somehow it reminds a chap of Eton days—your fags had to be smart. I remember your licking Lulworth for upsetting things and not cleaning up—'twas the making of the little beggar."

"Yes, I flatter myself that I looked properly after George's morals and brought him up in the way he should go. Here we do our own fagging. Hullo," he cried at the sound of a feeble knock rather low down on the door, followed by the intrusion of a small, unkempt head, "here's Violet Joan. What is it, mite?"

"Please, Jack, mother says to lend her your soap, she's run out, and father ain't brought home the Sattday money, and she ain't cleaned up yet," piped a small shrill voice, upon which Jack slipped behind the screen, brought out a square of yellow soap and halved it with a string.

"Had your tea?" he asked, observing a wistful gaze at the table, and receiving a melancholy shake of the head for negative, upon which the remains of the banquet were handed to her with the injunction to "eat it outside," which was joyfully carried out.

"You might have given her the lot, Bass," Airedale reproved in reference to the soap; "it would hardly have done more than clean down Violet Joan herself, let alone the rooms."

"I've known Violet Joan for some months," Bassett said, "but I've never known her clean. Now then?" in response to another knock. It was a woman this

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time, hoarse-voiced, with a broken feathered hat over front hair done up in curling pins and the bruised face that seems to be the badge of her tribe.

"Jack, dear," she asked coaxingly, "would ye just keep a hye on the kids, while I steps rahnd the corner after Bert? When the kettle biles, tike it off, will ye? 'Arry is bahnd to scald hisself if he starts liftin' of it. 'Ere's the key."

"You'd better leave Bert to himself," she was advised, but the key was taken. The woman was off, and a domiciliary visit to her family in the opposite room filled in conversational pauses during the rest of the visit, which was further marked by the irruption of a boy, with a request for the loan of a penneth of jam for father's supper and a kettle, because mother's had started to leak.

"If I'd known you were holding a reception to-night," Airedale remonstrated, "I would have waited for another chance of finding you alone. My costume appears to impress your guests with somewhat vivid admiration. Why not sport your oak?"

"We're not accustomed to evening dress here; some of us have never seen anything so startlingly white as your shirt-front before. As for sporting my oak, Jim, there are just a poor few things that money *can* buy, and one of the best is—privacy. Another is—social intercourse, the kind of intercourse that friendship is built upon—comradeship you can have to a certain extent and the sort of friendship, not a bad kind, that is based upon the interchange of small charities; but the very poor cannot have real, pleasurable, equal friendships, no true social intercourse. That seems to me one of the saddest things in life—sadder almost than want of common decency—There's Harry roaring? No. Atkins beating his wife, his usual Saturday night's entertainment—and cleanliness and quiet."

"There's a sadder thing, Bass. To see a man like you

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leading a life like this. To what end? You can't even stop that brute from bruising the woman below. You mind babies and lend bits of soap. Hay forking the Atlantic with a vengeance."

"Who knows?" Bassett sighed, with a long sad look. "Even hayforks might keep back the ocean, if there were enough of them; or, at least, the people phalanxed behind them might. Our settlement principle of just showing that decent and satisfactory lives *can* be lived in spite of adverse environment must tell in the long run."

"How many such drawing- and reading-rooms as this are there in this street, Bass, eh? I never smelt so many smells in my life as I did on my way up to this paradise."

"It is a paradise—it's alpine, positively alpine—that's a grand thing, near the stars and above the stinks."

"Which you gratefully snuff in Olympian superiority, as the gods do incense."

"The worst is we can't all be on the top."

"Ah! there's the rub. But at least let those be that can; I speak in parables. Chuck this, Bassett, chuck it; you've played the fool long enough, wasted more than enough time."

"Not wasted, Jim. If it's nothing else, it's at least an education. It's my Lehrjahre."

"Ah! so your father says—an education in the value of wealth and the misery of poverty, Bass. 'That'll knock the nonsense out of him,' says Sir Dan."

"Does he say that, poor dear old chap? Well, after all, compared with him, I'm only playing at poverty; personally, that is—hullo, there! Excuse me—"

The experimental student of poverty vanished and came back five minutes later breathless, and with marks of physical combat upon his face.

"Is this the usual programme?" Airedale asked, while Adrian fetched water and disappeared behind the screen. "A lesson in pugilism, or how?"

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"The brute was going too far; the woman was terribly knocked about," he replied, emerging from behind the screen, whence the faint splash of ablutions had been heard, with hair ruffled back by the application of a towel to a still bleeding face. "The usual result of meddling in matrimonial disputes. I hope, I do hope," he sighed, "the beast was not too drunk to remember that I gave him beans."

"But how about the woman? Won't she have it worse than ever after this?"

"Not unless she's idiot enough to uncord him. He's jolly well trussed hand and foot with good stout rope. To-morrow he'll come to me and cry and want to take the pledge."

"Hayforks. Did you ever walk into Thornton in this way? Or has the rich man a divine right to get drunk and bruise his wife? Oh! I say, Bassie, it's a piteous thing to see you wasting your life like this. I could cry like a woman over it. Poor George Lulworth did begin to blubber a bit, he said it was Flu— Think what you might do and be. Think of your father and your friends."

"I have thought, I think. Don't bother about me, Jim. Let me fight this thing out by myself."

"You are neglecting every duty, and wasting every opportunity, and grieving every friend, throwing away talent, time, unusual advantages; and to what end?" Airedale asked sternly.

Adrian removed the towel from his face, replaced it by a clean one, found that the bleeding had stopped, smoothed his hair and slipped into a coat during this address. Then he sat down and thought a little and sighed a little.

"You think me an obstinate fool, Airedale," he said, "and perhaps you are right. But I cannot do otherwise—at present, at all events."

"There's Press-work, there's literature, there's political

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work, I don't suggest going back to your father's business, you and he can never pull together. Even I could help you to many a post. But while you live in this wretched way—without the bare decencies of life—— Think of the deterioration that must result."

"That's the crux—there must be no deterioration."

"It's a form of pride. You want to do thoroughly what Tōlstoi only does by halves."

"Is it pride? Has any good work ever been done without repunciation?"

"Renunciation has many forms. A man can renounce self-will and pride. He can also renounce obvious duties and so serve the devil. Medieval ascetics begged—personally or collectively; but they never herded with drunkards in slums. They never worked for hire as labourers. What great man ever helped the world by becoming a day labourer?"

"Christ himself. He became a carpenter. And to every one he called he said, 'Leave all and follow me.'"

Airedale looked long and thoughtfully into the great, soft, earnest, dark eyes before he said, with gentleness, almost tenderness, in his voice, as if to a child: "That instance is hardly parallel. And that poverty was decent—not abject—not sordid—not degrading. There was a home for thirty years—once there was a wedding feast, with much wine and many guests. And when the time came to deliver the message and accomplish the sacrifice, the workshop was abandoned and feasts at rich men's tables were not disdained. And those fishermen were called from their boats to be made fishers of men, that is, from body labour to mind labour."

"Almost thou persuadest me, dear Jim. But the years at Nazareth, though silent, were many and eloquent, most eloquent, most awe-inspiring, most comforting."

"After all," Adrian said presently, "people can but follow what light they have. Even by their blunders people learn. My faith is that if we are true to the inner voice,

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however faintly it may sound, more light will be given us."

Airedale rose with a gesture of despair, and went to the window and looked out upon the dingy street and up at the dim stars.

"Look here," he said, turning back abruptly, "come and dine with me to-morrow—as you are, in those clothes, if you like, at that quiet house we know of, in that private room. Grimsby is coming, and D'Arcy, and one or two of the old set—we're hatching out a plan for a sort of weekly rag to air all our most cracked notions in—our most impossible loyalties and lost causes. We want you, in it—in the preliminary jaw, at all events. Come along, old chap."

"Don't you know why I kept so dark at first?" Bassett asked. "I should never have stuck to it else, with all you fellows at me. Besides, the day's filled up."

"What? you drive that beastly cart on Sundays?"

"No; social engagements. But I'm off the cart now, sacked to-night."

"Sacked? Paid off? Then come and be our editor, Bass; the salary won't be more than bread and cheese."

"Impossible. First start your paper, then catch your editor."

"But what are you going to do? How will you live?"

"I shall have a few days' rest. Here's my capital," he said, taking a handful of silver and a couple of gold pieces from his pocket and spreading them on the table with a contented smile. "Half will carry me through the week, and I shall look about South London and the Docks and see how they live there. Then I shall try jam, I think."

"Great Scott! You can never keep alive on a diet of jam. Why even vegetarians don't go so far as that."

"I shall live by jam, not *on* it—work in a jam factory; the season's just coming on. Wullie Grierson knows the foreman, a cousin of his, he'll get me taken on."

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"H'm; you accept your caddie's patronage and decline your intimate friend's influence? You glorious and illogical old Bass without the b——"

"With or without the b, I'm going through this thing, Jim. I want to know exactly how the others feel and what it is to live on that sharp and narrow brink of imminent starvation. The worst of it is I'm so infernally strong and tough, and have neither wife nor children to feed and house."

"You'll soon get over both those difficulties, no doubt. But you don't consider the other little drawbacks of being sober and steady and industrious and honest. They are a terrible hindrance to touching the starvation verge, Bassie. But even they are curable. By the way, have you seen those articles in the Evening Banner—'From the Depths'? They would enlighten you."

"Well—yes—perhaps they might—if I hadn't happened to have written them, that is."

"You arch fraud!" cried Airedale, with a mighty laugh. "You prince of humbugs! I begin to see daylight. You'll be out of this hole in time or I'm very much mistaken. But how about the imminent verge of starvation? How can a man who writes for the Banner when in full work contrive that?"

"Mightn't it be possible to have some definite, impersonal purpose for all pence resulting from the Banner?"

"Such as the poor-box or the hospital? H'm! Well, if you tumble over that starvation verge, Bass, you'll be a cleverer chap than I thought—you, who might have been a Blue and come out first in Greats. I shall name my eldest son, Bassett, after you, as I always have intended; and my first girl, Blanche."

"After her mother? I like the name almost as well as the bearer of it."

"Blanche will never be mother of my children, Adrian," he said sadly. "There's another spoilt life."

"Not Blanche's?"

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"Yes, hers. How blind you are, and how happy you might be!"

"But what has my happiness to do with Blanche? And how is her life spoilt? To me it always seems a singularly sweet and lovely and beneficent life."

"Oh! no doubt Heaven made bats as well as eagles, Bass—without the b. And so good night."

"Good night—I dare not say, come again; but—"

"Well?"

"Let me know about your paper. Odd, but there was such an idea in my head."

"Come and talk it over——"

"No—no—I'll write my notions and send—but meet any of the old set I dare not. Good night."

"He will come back," Airedale said to himself, as he groped his way down the stairs into the close street, where he found himself the observed of all observers and the subject of many remarks more candid than complimentary.

CHAPTER IV

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE GOLDEN RULE

SIR DANIEL was no longer the man he had been ; he had aged suddenly, as often happens to those who have long set Time's ravages at defiance. His great square shoulders took a slight stoop, his iron-grey hair whitened, the lines in his face deepened and multiplied ; but for all that he was as active and energetic as ever, perhaps even more so ; but he no longer cared to pause and think and dream over his good fortunes and successes. He was no longer sure that his life had been wholly successful ; his vast fortune could not buy the thing he wanted most ; his strong will had been thwarted in a vital point ; he was to some extent a beaten man, and to acknowledge himself beaten was too bitter.

Neville's marriage, that he had wished and forwarded, gave him little joy, and even the birth of an heir in the person of Neville's little son—a second Daniel Bassett—brought small consolation. This small Daniel came, through his mother, of one of the oldest families in the country, and was as promising as a baby could be.

"Well, Uncle Dan, and what else?" Phyllis asked, not for the first time, during the family council over the rejoicings at Bassett Towers on the birth of the heir.

He was silent, his hands crossed before him on the breakfast-table and his head bent, his whole attitude one of dreamy dejection, the heaviness of age in every line and feature.

"I give it up," he said, his thoughts far from the question before them. "He will never come back now."

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"Surely he has ~~practically~~ come back," she urged, stirred to deepest pity by his aged and grieved look.

"Not to me, not to his duty, not to his right mind, Phyllis. He won't give in—it's the Bassett toughness; but—but it's on the wrong side this time. He's held out for three mortal years; he's lived a working man's life; he's been picked up half-dead of want in the streets, and it has not broken his spirit or brought him to his senses. He'll never come round now."

"Dear Uncle Dan, you would not like his spirit to be broken, surely—the tough Bassett spirit?"

"I always thought he would come round," he said, with a heavy sigh. "I always said so. I thought that, when he knew what it was to be without a penny or the means of getting one, he would feel the value of money and be glad to be taken back. But no; when I wrote to him in the winter, during the long frost when so many were out of work, and offered him his old berth in Stevenson's, with an ultimate partnership and old scores wiped out, what was his answer? Conditions—the very same conditions we split upon. This must be altered and that given up, then perhaps his lordship might condescend to accept his father's help. And he half-starved and only keeping the wolf from the door for weeks together by writing some casual penny-a-line stuff for an evening paper. Oh, Lord! It's enough to drive one mad to think that with millions of his own making a man can't keep his only son from starving in the street."

"Not quite so bad as that," Phyllis ventured to say; "Adrian was ill. He had pneumonia during that bitter weather, like many rich people, and he soon pulled through."

"He was picked up senseless in the streets and carried to a hospital," Sir Daniel repeated, with dogged emphasis.

"Didn't he pick you up in the street once, during that same frost?" she asked.

"No, he didn't pick me up; he led me through the fog,

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when the beast of a cabman had dropped me ; and I wasn't starving, I had just had a bigger dinner than was good for me. By George ! what a facer it was to find that the poor, shivering beggar with the cockney twang who pulled me through the fog was Adrian. A fog is a precious bewildering thing when you can't see your hand before you and keep cannoning against things and people, and the more you turn round and walk on, the more you stay in the same place. And when I gave the fellow half a sovereign and a thank you, to see him touch his hat under the lamp and laugh and say, 'Thank you, dad,' in his own voice and vanish into the black wall of fog—well, you might have knocked me down with half a feather. My only son picking up coppers by leading people through the fog ! My handsome, clever boy ! Sometimes I think he must be mad. I wonder what did it, Phyllis ? Bassett brains were always strong and good. He was never fast, as far as I know—but you never can tell. He had everything heart could wish ; he was as good as married to the girl he wanted ; and all at once, without the slightest warning, he chucked the whole thing—because I wouldn't turn Stevenson's into a kind of charity soup-kitchen and blanket and coal club. Wanted me to *give* the goods away to the customers, as far as I could make out, and provide all the hands with a first-class table-d'hôte menu free every day. What put these crazes into his head Heaven only knows. They say typhoid often leaves a crack in the brain. But he began all this slummery and settlement tomfoolery before that. I always thought some woman was at the bottom of that slumming."

"Surely it was the atmosphere of his set. Lord Airedale and all his most intimate friends were concerned in the university settlement."

"But there's a she settlement in the same place, got up by some of those hussies who ape the men at the University. That cousin of Airedale's is one of them."

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She's a strong-minded young vixen, came out 'first in Greats—though of course they had the sense not to let her have them—and she has some influence over Adrian that I can't for the life of me understand. She's a good-looking wench—in her way handsomer than Isobel; it's a sort of witch way. Those great eyes of hers, that look you through and through, are enough to give you the creeps. I've heard my father talk of a witch who used to overlook people at Bassett. That girl has overlooked my poor boy. No use crying over spilt milk. Well, Phyllis, best settle with the rector about the school-children's feast. Anything you like, anything."

"He'll come back right enough," Neville said on one of the rare occasions when his uncle alluded to the prodigal; "he'll come back as soon as ever you acknowledge that the whole of your fortune is founded upon fraud—not before. He never could and never will understand that business is business. We've argued the thing by the hour together. He looks upon us two as thieves in a wholesale way—every penny we have ill-gotten. Pity he got into that priggish set. The Oxford man's brand is to be superior"—Neville was not a university man—"and Adrian has it twice over."

When Neville talked like this, the poor old man felt like a horse tormented by flies in August, and wanted to kick out in every direction at once. And it impressed upon him the sad fact that want of money would never bring the prodigal home, because money was the one thing he could never want.

This notion of Blanche's witchcraft, duly communicated to Airedale, amused him so much that he was obliged to convey it to her.

"But why on earth should the blame be upon poor me?" she asked. "Must a woman always be provided for a scapegoat? And how have I bewitched Adrian more than the rest—more than you and Mr. D'Arcy, the much-married D'Arcy, and Mr. Grimsby, the great

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growler? Did I originate the Brotherhood? Had I any hand in the genesis of the Reflector?"

"More than you think; but who can say how much any single mind originates anything? Ideas are in the air—chaotic—fluctuant—there comes a flash, a breath, a touch, whence or wherefore no one knows; and out of chaos springs a living form, beautiful and complete."

"Isn't that a little tall for the Brotherhood and the Reflector, Jim?"

"For the Reflector, if you like," he said, reddening, with an uncomfortable little laugh, "but not for the Brotherhood. Nothing can be too tall for that. It—it's a sort of religion."

"You *have* landed me a nasty one this time, Jim, for I couldn't possibly be a *brother*. The most I can ever hope for is an inferior post on the Reflector. I congratulate you on your oratorical talent; may it keep your constituents in good humour out of the House and lead you to eminence within it."

"Oh! but you *are* a brother—in spirit; you've been one all your life, and are to be asked to be one in reality."

"How can I without serious infraction of grammar?"

"We don't bother about grammar. We're going to have women in this thing, Blanche. Wait and see."

The Brotherhood of the Golden Rule was hardly come to the birth yet, but only slowly taking shape with every discussion between the brothers. No one knew exactly who was the originator. Marshland, the painter of the rich young ruler, in whose studio the brothers often met, said it was Bassett; Bassett said he didn't know, but rather thought it was Marshland or Airedale; Airedale, in his secret heart, was quite sure that it was Bassett and Blanche together.

In any case, on the occasion of the conversation in question, which took place in a corner of one of Lady Somersby's drawing-rooms after lunch, Airedale asked and received counsel of Blanche upon the development

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of the infant society, which was to meet at Grimsby's chambers in the evening. These chambers were in an inn turning out of Fleet Street, a very quiet and peaceful spot.

Thither, after an early dinner, Airedale repaired; and, climbing the worm-eaten oaken stair so reminiscent of careless undergraduate days and opening the door, above which Grimsby's name was painted, discerned, dim and shadowy in the cool summer twilight, a portion of the Brotherhood, some of them old university friends, already in session.

Wide-open windows looked upon tree-tops growing in the square, which recalled a college quadrangle in its sudden hush and peace scarcely stirred by the London roar, here softened to a distant, drowsy hum. The low oak-beamed room was unlighted; little points of red fire from cigars and pipes deepened the pleasant dusk and lit up familiar faces from time to time.

There sat Marshland, the distinguished painter, a tall, spare man, with severely beautiful features and brilliant, restless eyes; he was simply, almost shabbily, dressed, with none of those amiable little affectations of the picturesque so dear to artists; his tower-like brow, projecting over deep-set eyes like Leonardo's, gave his face a sort of stern aloofness and something of the dreamy inscrutability and intellectual power characteristic of Leonardo's. He was listening to a young clergyman's indignant tirade against some industrial cruelty.

Dickie Housman, or Coster Dick, as he was usually and affectionately called, was one of a staff of hard-working curates in South London. Some of his parishioners were professional thieves, some were costers, none were prosperous, and few were respectable. Dickie was as little respectable as his calling permitted, and frequently and openly professed his disdain of a quality that seems to be going out of favour in these days. He had been a Balliol man and stroke of his college eight, and had graduated quite creditably. He had also been in the

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Airedale-Bassett set. A Magdalen man and a distinguished tosher were also present; D'Arcy followed Airedale, and was followed by George Lulworth. The room, fair-sized though low-pitched, was nearly full.

"The Brotherhood," Grimsby said, raising his voice above the general hum of disjointed talk, "has an organ, the first half-year's issue of which went off like smoke."

"Hurrah!" came from the assembly in file-firing succession.

"First half-year's issues often go off like smoke," Grimsby said in a melancholy voice. "All the same, let's drink to its success."

A cheerful popping of corks followed and was succeeded by the still cheerier hiss of cordial liquor brimming glasses; these the brothers emptied with evident satisfaction, except Dickie Housman and one or two settlement men, who gently and resignedly sipped the toast in iced coffee.

"Not that its secret aim ever will succeed," muttered Grimsby, unlifted from dejection by this pleasing rite. "It's another of our lost causes, predestined to failure."

"No, no, no!" echoed through the dim room.

"Well, let's have some light anyhow," said Coster Dick, "and take cheerful views of things. Though, of course, the thing will fail when the money's run through."

"The money will carry us through a year at least," Grimsby said, walking round the room and putting matches to gas-jets and lamps.

"And that means fifty-two more papers directly breathing the spirit of the Brotherhood," Airedale added. "We must have no more than one each week. The Reflector, like a wasp, carries its sting in its tail. Otherwise it seems to be a useful, bee-like creature. A weekly review of politics, literature, science, and art, somewhat on the lines of the Spectator."

"Airedale," Grimsby said, "continues to be responsible for the politics; the general staff you know; and of course no opportunity of dealing with social subjects as they arise,

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either in events or writings, has been or will be lost. It is our wish to reach the general public—that semi-cultivated, review-reading public, that in the mass thinks so little and thinks it thinks so much, and which must be primed with everything of contemporary interest, that broad public, from which public opinion is gathered—and gradually to inoculate them with the principles that animate the Brotherhood. The British public hates new ideas and old ones in new form. Offer it any ostensible novelty, and the old Viking spirit rises in revolt; invisibly instil fresh currents in the air it breathes, and it assimilates them and gives them forth again for its own. We don't want to proselytize, only to let our views circulate and have their fair chance of acceptance. Those that can assimilate them may, those that cannot will not in any case. Therefore the Brotherhood's connexion with the Reflector is still to be a dead secret. Are all firm on that?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And the Brotherhood is to shrink from publicity, as far as is compatible with its existence, and none are lightly to be admitted to it, and those only after substantial proof of sincerity."

"Hear, hear!"

"When did the Brotherhood begin?" Marshland asked.

"Nominally and formally it begins to-night; actually in its essence it began in a medieval garret, under the shadow of historic towers and exquisite architecture dating primarily from Saxon days and continuously till now—in the careless chatter of a set of happy boys. Its conclusions, briefly put, are these:—

"That there is a worm at the root of our present civilization, which is lust of material enjoyment.

"That the spirit of gain is increasing and desolating the whole of society, denying Christianity, destroying beauty, killing art and literature, and converting healthy industrial life into joyless, mechanic slavery.

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" That the present aims of commerce are entirely wrong and vicious, and their pursuit will in time overthrow civilization and turn European nations back to primeval savagery.

" That existing excessive poverty is the resultant antithesis of existing excessive wealth.

" That in proportion as ignoble commerce tends to destroy society, so noble commerce may redeem and enrich it.

" That no Christian man or nation may pursue commerce, or any other calling, for gain alone, but that all commerce should aim first at increasing the welfare of mankind, moral and spiritual, as well as material.

" That the responsibilities of wealth being very great, and, especially in the case of wealth not immediately derived from land, often involving such exploitation of helpless human labour as amounts to slavery, are not lightly or extensively to be sought by Christian men, and that no man can without blame enjoy the usufruct of wealth, unless acquainted with the way in which it is produced, or 'made' in financial cant.

" That all men are born neither free nor equal, but mutually answerable for and dependent upon each other, and that from those born to much much is required.

" That no civilization not based on Christianity can escape corruption and dissolution, and that the true aim of civilization, as of education, is the broadest and fullest and most harmoniously balanced development of all human faculties.

" That industries in which machinery plays a principal part are therefore a step backwards, in civilization, because they unduly specialize and narrow human faculties and produce a degraded, joyless, and excessively helpless type of people.

" That the desire of excessive and rapid wealth leads to the excessive development of such degraded and de-civilized populations as result from those industries that are based chiefly on machinery.

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"This is a brief summary of the chief aims and opinions, the discussion and development of which, between a few intimate friends and comrades, has drawn them into what we now call 'The Brotherhood of the Golden Rule.' Is it so?"

A murmur of assent ran round the room, hummed out of the wide-opened windows, and stirred the cool green leafage in the quiet square.

"All brothers admitted to the Golden Rule," continued Grimsby, "agree to live in accordance with these principles and to do what they can to further them. No hard and fast rules as yet exist, the Brotherhood being so young; many will doubtless evolve themselves as time goes on. The Reflector, or rather the weekly social article that will continue to appear in that paper, is partly the origin and partly the first corporate act of the Brotherhood. That article will henceforth be subject to the approval or censure of the Brotherhood, before whom it will be laid. It will often embody ideas discussed by the Brotherhood."

"Is it clearly understood who continues to finance the Reflector?" asked D'Arcy, the City man.

"It is financed," replied Airedale from the window-seat, "by a brother who wishes to be unknown."

"That," Coster Dick murmured to his neighbours, "will be difficult, considering how few of the brothers have a penny to bless themselves with."

"The Brotherhood," Grimsby announced, "will annually choose an Elder Brother as its head, appeal to whom will be final. It has been proposed that Marshland, our senior by nature, should accept this post for the first year. What do you say, Marshland?"

"That it is equally astonishing and complimentary, and requires consideration."

"Oh, it's nothing," Grimsby returned, with cheery autocracy; "there's nothing to do except in case of a row. Let's put it to the vote. Hands up for Marshland!"

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Up went every hand. "You're in by acclamation, Marshland."

"But the acceptance still remains," he expostulated. "Besides, the brothers are not all present. Among the absentees is one who is (I think it is an open secret that he is) the mainspring and originator and most powerful developer of our little young fraternity. The Reflector exists chiefly for the weekly article he writes for us. It was his idea."

"By the way, where is Bassett?" asked Grimsby. "He was to have turned up to-night. Has anybody seen Bassett lately?"

"Ah! where is Bassett?" came simultaneously from several others.

"Not far," replied a well-known voice, and all eyes were directed to a corner by a folding screen near the door, into which a man in evening dress had slipped unobserved a few minutes since.

"What?" cried Coster Dick, after some seconds of speechless amazement. "Bassett, in that kit?"

"Where is Bassett, the working man; Bassett, the docker; Bassett, the unemployed?" asked Grimsby sternly. "Have the flesh-pots of Egypt lured you back to destruction?"

"Must we write Ichabod on the Brotherhood?" D'Arcy asked, in his chaffing way.

"Oh! stop this rot," cried Lulworth. "Why should Bassett be a working man more than the rest of us?"

"As a matter of fact," added Airedale, "the private secretary of a public man works pretty hard. There's only one man in the kingdom who works harder, and that is a really conscientious and able Prime Minister."

"I am sorry that I couldn't get off before," Bassett apologized; "and I've only an hour and a half now. I have to meet my chief and prime him with facts between the State dinner and the ball. The brothers seem to be

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surprised, even scandalized, by the change in my life. Is it so ? ”

“ Disappointed,” said Coster Dick gloomily.

“ Disappointed is the word,” Grimsby corroborated.

“ Some of us were greatly uplifted by the moral effect of a life of voluntary poverty and renunciation,” Marshland added, with grave tenderness that stabbed deeper than bitterest rebuke.

Bassett's face paled, and he was silent.

“ We have no rule of absolute poverty,” he said presently, “ nor any rule prescribing the brothers' choice of profession ; nor did the private affairs of any brother seem to me to come within the scope of the Brotherhood's activity. But if the brothers rule it otherwise and put me on my trial, I am ready to explain and justify the course I have thought fit to pursue.”

“ We are all intimate friends, Bassett,” Grimsby said, “ and I think we have a rule, understood, if not yet formulated, of comparative or relative poverty. We are agreed to hold no more property than appears necessary to the performance of our individual duties. Is it so, brothers ? ”

“ It is so,” was the unanimous reply.

“ Then I will ask you to bear with me while I give my reasons,” returned Bassett, “ though they are well known to two of the brothers, who uphold me in the decision I have at last taken after long debate.”

He looked round the low-pitched room upon the friendly faces looming grave and expectant through floating films of smoke, stepped up to a central position near Grimsby, and began his defence.

CHAPTER V

THE RECEPTION AT MIDSHIRE HOUSE

EVERY one held Lord Aynesworth's marriage among the few really successful pieces of celestial manufacture in that kind ; many even went so far as to deduce the wisdom of disparity of years in marriage from this example. The young marchioness filled her high position with such gaiety, brilliance, and apparent enjoyment, as made her an exceptionally pleasant hostess. She was particularly successful in keeping her husband's political following in touch by judiciously planned dinners and receptions and well-arranged town and country parties : she proved a most valuable help in by-elections and political campaigns. She showed tact and possessed that magnetic attraction, which, when combined with beauty and charm, is more powerful than the most brilliant intellect and extensive information, and sets every accomplishment and capacity of its possessor in an imaginative atmosphere that doubles and trebles their actual value.

Her life was a full one ; yet, though she was more lost to her family than any of her sisters on their marriages, they often wondered how she contrived to accomplish so much in so many different ways. And in the midst of all this semi-public and social life, she fulfilled the primary duty of her rank and produced an heir to the dukedom, a sturdy and handsome little offshoot of nobility, who seemed quite alive to the privileges of his rank, and made the nurseries ring with wrath and indignation

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whenever his will was delayed or crossed by attendant slaves.

"It is the one privilege common to the race, the one sacred, inalienable right to which all men are born," Blanche explained to his maternal grandmother, who was proudly exhibiting him, when some such explosion of wrath convulsed his small and dimpled and sturdy body and he gave vent to kicks and bounds and ear-splitting shrieks enough for five babies, so that even Blanche's accustomed arms could hardly hold him. "The only difference is that some have many slaves and some few; the very workhouse babe is an autocrat exacting and pitiless. And if this baby yells enough for five he has names enough for ten, Aunt Jessie. How does he begin, Isobel?"

"Heaven knows—and perhaps the bishop. The god-fathers had to have it typewritten. Reginald has about a dozen Christian names of his own, mostly in three syllables; it took so long to marry so many I'd half a mind to run off with some one-syllabled man in the middle. Never ask me how many syllables I married, Blanche, I never could tell. When will this little Boanerges be big enough to smack, mother? He wants it badly now. Take him away, nurse."

Blanche, used to nursing the babes of the unwashed, resigned her struggling burden with regret, and his grandmother looked rather wistfully after him when he was borne away; Isobel seemed relieved.

"I understand now why the average middle-class mother is so limited and dull," she said; "continuous squalling softens the brain and narrows the outlook on life."

"But even the one-syllabled ones sometimes leave off squalling," Blanche hazarded rather doubtfully.

"They occasionally sleep," Lady Kilmeny added, with conviction; "unless other people want to, when every conscientious child does his best to murder sleep. Your

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nurseries are well out of hearing, Belle, but a little steep to run to at odd moments. Well, dear, you are fortunate in having contrived to originate such a beautiful little babe."

"Yes," the marchioness returned absently; "but so terribly like his father."

"My dear, the Goring beauty is historic," said Lady Kilmeny.

"So is all that is past," murmured Isobel.

"Besides," continued her mother, "he has the Mostyn nose."

The marchioness observed that eyes of some kind were inevitable even at that early age, and that the decidedly Hebraic hook in the nose of poor Eileen's infant was much to be deplored, while the phrase "so terribly like his father" kept repeating itself in Blanche's brain.

"I do think you might contrive to come to the Midshire House show, Blanche," Isobel said to preoccupied ears. "It really will be the smartest thing of the year. People have been fighting and perjuring themselves to get cards. I should like you to see me in my frock—a perfect dream and so original. And I mean to make the Prince of—laugh, not smile, but laugh out helplessly and uproariously; he seldom gets beyond a pale and attenuated grin, you know. Have you seen Midshire House? Worth seeing, isn't it, mother?"

"I should like to see you in all your glory and half your diamonds, Belle, extracting laughter from solemn Oriental potentates. And the galleries, too. I have seen the grand staircase and can picture you receiving home and foreign princes and magnates in bowers of roses and magnificence. But it can't be."

"It's not a thing to miss, Blanche; everybody will be there," Lady Kilmeny urged.

"Except those who have hung themselves for want of cards. I hear that some have even got up expeditions

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to the North Pole to account for their absence. 'Daddy thought of getting himself sent out to Tibet to convert the Grand Llama before he was made happy by his card. He'll tell us all about it, mother and me.'

"Oh! but your mother *must* come," Lady Kilmeny insisted. "I shall make her. Why, the reception will be historic. Belle mayn't have such an opportunity again, even when she's duchess actually, instead of potentially."

The reception *was* historic, the blaze of diamonds unparalleled, the sparkle of stars and orders unprecedented, emanating from the gorgeous East as well as from the dim rich West. The conservatories and gardens of the duke's castles and country seats had been ravaged and the gardeners driven frantic to decorate the grand staircase and historic hall of Midshire House, many a nook and corner of which was a bower banked with solid masses of rose and carnation, lily and myrtle, after a scheme originated by Isobel, which had the sanction and emendation of one of the greatest living artists. The supper-rooms were a fairyland of exquisite combinations of flowers and subdued, flower-like lights. Some tables were laid in the grounds under branching trees, that at once screened and lighted them by fruit of soft glowing fire pendent from overhanging boughs. The famous collections of armour, carvings, china, gems, pictures, and sculpture were displayed to advantage; such as were a permanent part of the house decoration forming the groundwork for the floral ornamentation. In the grounds were side shows to suit all tastes; the music was good and the weather kind, as if sometimes can be, even in mid-June nights. Madame Albanesi sang, by permission of Covent Garden, also the superb tenor, de Vezski; the newest infant prodigy played in and conducted a symphony of his own composition in the astonished presence of royalty, British and foreign. The grand concert was given in a suite of rooms opening upon a spacious and beautiful

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lobby at the top of the grand staircase, where, but for the buzz of conversation and rustle of trailing silks, it would have been perfectly audible through the great double doors, and was, in spite of that, sufficiently so to form a magnificent accompaniment in Isobel's brain to the glittering pageant that defiled before her unsated vision, as she stood erect and beautiful in her rich attire, with a soft and steady fire in her eyes, a delicate flush on her cheek, a magnetic sweetness on her smiling lips, and a something, more vivid and sparkling than the diamonds flaming above her hair and on her neck and arms and waist, emanating from her every look and word.

So she had stood in the sunset by the foam-ridged sea at St. Andrews, thrilling in every fibre with keen and exquisite vitality, more lovely in her simple, unadorned white dress, and yet in a way less beautiful, than now in her jewelled splendour and sumptuous surroundings. Enjoyment and vitality lend beauty to the homeliest features and heighten that of the most perfect, and Isobel was drinking to-night, as in that autumn evening in Scotland, deeply, if differently, of the fullness of life.

Even to the accustomed eyes of Airedale, who was coming up the stairs, she was a revelation. "The very handsomest, the most superb woman of our blood," he was thinking and whispering to his mother. "She's in form to-night and no mistake."

"Nobody pays for dress like Belle," his mother returned; "and nobody dresses better than she, but it takes diamonds and delight to bring out all the beauty of her."

"Ah! you should have seen your mother at that age, Airedale," Lord Somersby gallantly commented. And yet on a second look at the superb young figure receiving her guests with such sweet and tranquil grace, Airedale lost his first dazzled impression, and wondered what he missed in the vivid glance and proudly-carried form.

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Was there a little too much restraint in the subdued sparkle of that winning address, a suspicion of calculation in the gay grace of speech and smile? The man she was receiving, an ex-minister of the Opposition side, eloquent and eminent, was lingering—no fresh comer just then following—dazzled and charmed by some winged words from her lips, his face kindling, his eyes brightening, till the on-coming rush of guests forced him reluctantly on his way into the music flooding the brilliance beyond.

Airedale thought of his dear friend, who had loved her with such ideal love and lost her with such enduring heartbreak, and wondered how they had ever come together. Splendour was so evidently a vital element to this superbly gifted creature that the breach was inevitable. And not only splendour was necessary, but homage, that thrilling homage of quivering lip and throbbing pulse, of troubled gaze and broken speech, so terribly dear to woman, and that sense of power, which goes to the head like wine, to stir the currents of men's blood and guide the aims of men's lives—especially of great and ruling men—and to keep one's own head all the time. A superb but terrible game that, with souls for stakes—so Airedale thought, who had seen the open and undisguised adoration offered at this shrine.

The Somersby party reached the top of the stairs just when there was a lull in the tide of guests, and Airedale lingered in the lobby, while his father and mother went on. He advised Isobel to sit and rest a little, which she did gladly, the most important people not having arrived, notably, that potentate whose policy might be influenced, so Aynesworth calculated, by the effect produced upon him, and for whom this entertainment was really, though not avowedly, given.

"We must win him," Aynesworth had told her; "he is known to be amenable to personal considerations. The flattery must be very subtle and very daintily sug-

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gested. He must be made to laugh if possible ; a little refined malice fetches him, he loves a quick retort and doesn't disdain a witty contradiction."

"Do tell me his red rags," Isobel murmured to Aire-dale, "and what he chiefly prides himself upon ; Aynesworth tells me you have had opportunities of knowing."

"I doubt if any one knows as much about him as Aynesworth, Belle. But—to hear a woman laugh is a red rag to him."

She told off the red rags and vanities on a minute paper with a programme pencil tucked into her bouquet-holder amongst the flower stems, and sat thoughtfully looking at the memoranda, while a violin and piano preluded a song for the new baritone, who was making such a sensation in the musical world. The rich voice was just beginning on a deep chest note, when people arrived, and she rose to say the same things for the hundredth time and shake similar hands in a similar way with perennial freshness of smile and voice, weaving, as it were, the same old conventional pattern on a woof of richer and fresher music, out-rolled from the loom of voice and instruments within.

It was an English song, set to a simple and moving melody, the words accurately enunciated, not a shade of meaning lost.

Fare thee well, beloved,
Nevermore may we
Stand, as yester evening
By the moon-charmed sea,

Hand in hand, beloved,
Heart to throbbing heart,
Mute with thoughts transcending
All that words impart.

Nevermore, beloved,
Since thy breath with mine
Mingled when souls met
In that hour divine,

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Shall I stand without thee,
Free and strong alone,
But as one limb-cloven,
Bone from shuddering bone.

Draughts of Lethe, Time brings
From his healing store,
But the old lost joyance
Never, never more.

Like the Sundered summits
Rhine-waves run between,
We shall be, our lives long,
Scarred by what has been.

Though with years grief slumbers,
Though some joys be mine,
I shall ever hunger
For that smile of thine.

Gladness ring thy matins,
Peace thy vesper bell ;
Fare thee well, once loving,
Ever loved, farewell !

Clear as a bell rang every note and every word above the confused buzz of voices and rustle of rich stuffs. Airedale, from the corner into which he had drifted in disjointed, neutral talk with somebody of no importance, arrested by the unusual charm of the baritone's distinct enunciation and deeply moving voice, saw a change steal over Isobel's face and a far-off look come into her eyes. The welcoming smiles, the half-dozen necessary phrases, the gracious manner ; all were there, but with a difference ; the life was gone, where a face had been was a mask.

He saw that she was fighting against an overmastering something ; the delicate rose left her cheek, the far-off dream-look in her shining eyes grew to agony ; but the lips, paling more and more, still smiled, their graciousness gradually hardening to a set sweetness that was almost a grimace. She was evidently speaking at ran-

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dom to people who were but shadows, nameless, in spite of the sonorous names passed from servant to servant and clearly proclaimed to ears deafened by some inward, invincible tumult. Now there was a faint tremor in all the tall grace of her ; she began to sway, but pulled herself sharply together ; involuntarily, Airedale glided from his corner and slipped through the surrounding groups to her side.

"Never heard it before," a guest, looking at the illuminated satin programme, was saying to her ; " words by N. S. V. N. P. Splendid voice."

"Water ?" Airedale whispered, pushing a chair forward for her. "Best sit a moment."

"What is it ?" asked the duke, whose silver head and ribboned star had just come in sight. The arrival of royalty had been signalled and he was on his way to the hall.

"Air, give me air," the poor marchioness murmured, collapsing and falling helplessly on Airedale's arm.

"Help carry the chair," he said to a couple of footmen who came at his beckoning. "Lady Aynsworth—overcome by heat," he told the vexed and bewildered duke ; "right again in a minute."

The three men had her at an open window screened by a bank of roses in no time, and while one ran for a maid and Airedale vigorously fanned her, she opened her eyes and sat up, shrinking and startled at the sudden burst of applause that announced the end of the song.

"N. S. V. N. P. ?" she murmured helplessly.

"Oh, it's all right," Airedale said ; "buck up, and don't bother about the song. The royal party is arriving and Midshire looking for you."

Of course Airedale knew, and knew that she knew, those initials, indicating Dante's line, "*Nella sua voluntade é nostra pace*," that to many sums the whole meaning and mystery of human life ; also that Bassett, having

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once used the initials to sign some verses, had taken them as a permanent *nom de plume*; though perhaps Airedale was not aware how deeply that great sentence had sunk into Adrian's mind and coloured his thoughts. But Isobel knew; and the sudden realization of her own knowledge of the completeness with which the man who loved her so truly had opened his mind and heart to her and her alone, was a pang beyond words. Why was this song chosen, she wondered, on this special occasion? It seemed as if Adrian had risen from the obscurity and forgetfulness in which he chose to hide, and come in his own person to her fête, to heap tenderness and reproaches upon her and tell out his love and sorrow in the ears of all her world, and in the face of all to recall the happiness she had lost and the love she had rejected. The deadly personality of the song seemed to strip her soul bare and discover its wounds to the gaze of all. Everybody must know, she thought; all must see this fresh dart quivering in her bleeding breast before their eyes; she was being put to the torture in public. The malignity was fiendish, the revenge complete. The first lines in the baritone's superb voice and cruelly pure enunciation caught her away at once from the shining pageant, and carried her back to the autumn sunset on St. Andrews Bay, and stabbed her to the heart with that exquisite agony of lost, irrecoverable happiness. All had to be lived over again in the sight of innumerable eyes, every throb of past joy turned to pangs of present pain, every sacred, sweet memory profaned by the vulgar gaze. How had this been planned so accurately? she wondered,

Fare thee well, once loving,
Ever loved, farewell—

ringing over and over again in her ears.

Perhaps the strain and excitement of the well-imagined and successful fête, the culmination of so many minor activities in that line, had been too much for Isobel's

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finely strung nerves, else she might have reflected that, except a few intimate friends, no one knew or cared to know who was the owner of those initials attached to a few scattered lyrics, one of which had chanced to attract the eye of a song-maker on the look out for a verse to fit the vagrant melody in his brain at the moment. Still less, she might have considered, was it likely that the verse-writer had the remotest suspicion that his song would chance to be sung in her ears and at her own fête. Even so her anger died quickly to bewildered sorrow and amazement mingled with remorse, and her heart melted at the pain she had dealt the one heart she had truly loved. The music was answerable for much, also the fine voice and finished singing.

All this rushed through her swimming head in a second, with the inrush of cool night air and the restorative brought by the maid and Airedale's friendly voice telling her to pull herself together; and in five or six minutes the incident was at an end, and Isobel was receiving the most distinguished of her father-in-law's guests with all prescribed ceremony and apparent ease and grace. But there had been a slight hitch, a brief delay, which had to be explained, and the event of the evening distinctly missed fire. A slight ruffling of hair and disarray of detail in her sumptuous toilet, a perceptible effort to give full attention, that took the sparkle from what should have been spontaneously brilliant talk, weariness in eyes unnaturally bright, a wan and wistful look in a face artificially and hastily pinked by the maid during the brief interval by the window; all marred the fresh and vivid beauty and bright flow of wit. The remainder of the evening, as far as the hostess was concerned, fell flat for all her gallant effort to shake off spectres and live in the vivid fullness of the moment.

"What if that dreadful baritone sang again?" she pondered, while she sat in the place of honour by the most honoured guest, and scarcely knew that Albanesi

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was singing the "Liebestod" from Tristan in a way that might wring tears from a Maxim gun.

"Yes," she said absently, when the decorously restrained applause died away. "She is perhaps better on the stage—these snippets damp the fire—no time to get into the full glow—dash—spirit—So charming of you to like the illumination of the programme—done by a poor gentlewomen's work guild—N. S. V. N. P., probably a *nom de plume*—these drawing-room poets are often less than minor—hearts and darts, pain and vain, sort of thing." But her eyes ran anxiously over the painted satin, in the vain fear lest the too-successful baritone's name should appear again, while

I shall ever hunger
For that smile of thine,

haunted her in the rich pathos of the baritone's voice ; and that strange, heart-riving home-sickness, a longing, not for home, but for a lost irrecoverable past, consumed her.

Suddenly the splendour she had loved sickened her ; this hereditary palace of the dukes of Midshire, one day to be her own, shrank to mean dimensions and meretricious ornament ; all that glitter of jewels and orders and pomp of colour and costly tissue seemed tawdry and stagy ; the beauty of women's faces and shining shoulders, a fleshly, fading charm ; the culture and intellect, breeding and distinction, of statesman, soldier, prince, and peer, a thin varnish ; and the pleasure of assembling all that constitutes the flower and culmination of the rank and power and intellect of a highly cultured society, hollow and vain. One face outweighed them all ; one moment by the tumbling billows in that autumn sunset was worth years in this glittering world. The fever and fret and long perpetual strain had been too much ; she longed for peace and tranquil, enduring joys, and all that lost freshness and enthusiasm of youth. The con-

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cert dragged a weary length along ; the ball, with its costume and picture dances, was unending ; and how insipid those carefully contrived caves for magic crystal readers and palmists, side shows, and *cafés chantants* seemed now. An hour in a college garden, the simple youthful gaiety of dances in medieval halls, the laughter, unpremeditated fun and careless frolic in grave historic haunts of learning and piety—how sweet and vivid with delight they were ! And the fragrance of those St. Andrews days, and of more recent Sundays, when Adrian, free from the week's grind, found his holiday and rest at her side ; the simple Irish home-life, brightened by the coming of that gallant young lover, and the sweetness of those hours of permitted dual solitude !

Why had he cast her away into this whirling vortex of vain pomp ? Why had she bartered her birthright of love and romance for this cloying pottage of empty show and vain ambition ? A lost child crying for home was not more forlorn than Isobel Aynsworth entertaining the brilliant assemblage that night.

The most distinguished guests were gone and the dancing half done, when Isobel, a little overdone by a ten-minutes' diplomatic talk at a supper-table with a man who had to be influenced without his knowledge, found an opportunity to slip away and rest in a little waiting-room, niched between the great entrance hall and library, where the light was dim and restful, and double doors and deep-piled carpets dumb'd all sounds from the house. Through an open window from the garden she came, hanging lights from trees shimmering over her rich attire, as she flitted like a moonbeam across the sill into the shadow of the scantily lighted room. She was about to sink upon a deep and downy Chesterfield in the shadow, when she became conscious of some one in the room and stopped short. A figure moved into the circle of light under a shaded lamp ; she recognized the face ; her head swam and her heart stopped.

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For a moment she thought that the dark figure, with a gibus under the arm and a bundle of papers in the hand, might be a delusion, or perhaps some guest whose face in the uncertain lights caught a passing resemblance to one she knew too well ; but when the figure turned and faced her with an inquiring gaze, soon lighted by a flash of recognition, she stumbled blindly forward with a quick involuntary cry of "Adrian !" and would have fallen, but that he met and caught her in his arms, just as the opening library door threw a broad lane of light into the room, in the brightness of which appeared Lord Aynsworth.

CHAPTER VI

ADRIAN BEFORE THE BROTHERHOOD

THE Brotherhood assembled in Grimsby's low-beamed room in the quiet inn leading out of the roar of Fleet Street, listened with grave and anxious attention to what Bassett had to say in his defence.

Coster Dick could hardly bring his mind to bear on the arraigned brother's defence for grief at sight of his trim and spotless attire and clean-shaven face; "well groomed" was the contemptuous but expressive epithet in which he summed his offensively correct dress. Grimsby observed, more in sorrow than anger, that the erring brother's tailoring was of the old and expensively perfect fit; but his heart softened at the discovery that the ancient iniquity of jewel studs had been abandoned. However, Grimsby and Coster Dick both felt that with his beard Bassett had cast all sound principle to the winds; they could find no excuse for the wanton passage of a razor over a face dedicated to the Golden Rule. Airedale's razor had its excuse in long and uninterrupted habit, and much might be pardoned to Lulworth's youth, but Bassett ought to have been above such frivolous indulgence. For who ever heard of a clean-shaven and well-tailored reformer? Rough attire and rugged beards, wild hair and want of linen, have ever been held proper to men with missions.

"If you will submit to a few minutes' boredom," the accused said, "I will endeavour to explain my share in the thoughts and hopes that have drawn us few men

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together. I was born to an unfortunately fortunate life. I never knew denial of anything wealth could give. Of the poor—except as unwashed people, with no manners and less knowledge, or as the bored recipients of needless and demoralizing charity—or of the sharp contrast between lavish luxury and excessive poverty, I knew and thought nothing, still less that this luxury of the rich might be the price of the suffering of the poor, till that night in my room, when Grimsby talked of Marshland's picture of The Great Refusal and the incompleteness of Tolstoi's renunciation. I judge that man more gently now.

"Then I decided seriously to study these things by every means in my power; but all my reading and reflection brought me nothing but doubt and disquiet. Then I went to the Settlement and saw poverty eye to eye, poverty stripped of its last rag and laid, bare and bleeding, before me, and vowed to do my utmost towards the reduction of the gigantic mass of misery and degradation that underlies the luxury of great cities.

"We of the Brotherhood have discussed these things again and again, and only very slowly and uncertainly arrived at one or two conclusions concerning them. But I, at that time, was rich, not in material things only, but in the prospect of great happiness and success—and—I fear, careless of the needs of others.

"But sorrow came to me and humiliation, and through them I thought to hear the Voice that said to the rich man of the gospel—'Sell all thou hast!'

"That command, the Brotherhood are agreed, is not to all—but only to certain predestinate souls."

"The Brotherhood," interrupted Coster Dick, "are sworn to accept that command in the spirit and hold no property absolute, but only such relative wealth as is necessary to each man's calling and the claims upon him."

"But only as a protest against the Mammon worship

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of a plutocratic age," Airedale amended; "not because to hold property is either unlawful or inexpedient."

"At that time," Bassett continued, "I may have thought property unlawful, I certainly thought it unlawful for me. And remembering that all bread-winning vocations open to a public school and university man are in the nature of capital, the training being costly and impossible except for the rich——"

"Scholarships—scholarships," muttered Airedale.

"The only right and consistent thing seemed to be to eat no bread not earned by my own physical, unskilled labour——"

"I say, old chap," D'Arcy broke in, with his gay, irrepressible laugh, "you must have found it jolly hard to make yourself physically unskilled, unless you took in plain sewing."

"He drove a van," Grimsby explained in all the solemnity of his deepest bass; "unskilled van-drivers go straight to hospitals or police courts."

"He was a dock labourer," urged Coster Dick, with majesty.

"With Eton-trained muscles?" D'Arcy exclaimed.

"D'Arcy has hit it," Bassett replied. "I was too well trained even for the jam factory where I worked once; everywhere, except in positive crafts like tailoring and plumbing, I was at a cruel advantage over the average street-bred labourer; and I am sure that, in the acquisition of any special handicraft, a university man must far out-distance one with a board school education."

"It was the moral and religious training that gave Bassett his advantage," Coster Dick said, "and that is to be had neither for money nor for price. But why on earth didn't you learn a craft, Bassett?"

"Now at last I am learning a craft—cabinet-making."

"Actually?" cried Grimsby, with exultation; "you? apprenticed to cabinet-making?"

"And breaking," chuckled D'Arcy.

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"The brothers," said the man on his defence, through the shout of laughter that followed, "may not be aware that three years spent among the poorest and least skilled of the working classes on equal terms is an education in itself. Nobody, not a born fool, could go through that mill and come out unchanged."

"That is the point," Grimsby assented. "What the brothers want to know is, how many principles you left behind in the mill, when you came out of it as the glass of fashion and the mould of form."

"Do not the Reflector and 'From the Depths' chime with the principles of the Brotherhood, and don't they show that the crude notion of property being unlawful vanished in the face of facts? I think I may honestly say that I don't regret or grudge a moment of the years I spent as a working man among working men; they gained me many valuable friendships with simple and sorrow-burdened men. But those years seem to have taught me all that there is to learn from actual experience of those greyest, least-favoured, and most joyless lots apportioned by the conditions of this civilization of curs. But a softly nurtured, carefully schooled man cannot taste the darkest, most bitter experiences——"

"Yet he's been picked up destitute and dying in the street—he's been ill from starvation," shouted Lulworth.

"Ah! but I knew all the time that a word would bring me friends and help. I never—like my poor father—saw those of my own blood perish of want before my eyes. He was only a boy when he saw his young sister die of illness brought on, and aggravated by privation, only a boy when he saw his father sink under disappointment and despair. After all, I was only playing at poverty, masquerading as working man. I could never be the real thing. But I have learnt all that those years had to teach, and that great poverty is a very bitter thing, and have come to see that I have no right to take work that other men are dying for want of. Finally it has become clear

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to me that if I am to be of the slightest use in helping to mitigate the condition of the poor and lessen the evils of excessive poverty, it must be done by employing all these advantages of training and culture which it would be criminal to throw away——”

“And so you desert us,” Coster Dick interrupted. “You forget that nothing raises the general level of men of any class like the daily and hourly influence of an absolutely spotless life conditioned like their own.”

“And who,” Bassett asked, “can say that he leads such a life? And what is one obscure life among so many? I don’t profess—the Brotherhood does not profess—to have solved the dark problem of the terrible inequalities in human lives; but I know that although bitter poverty is inevitable, even necessary and beneficial—for without that perpetual possibility of imminent death from famine, the chief incentive to human effort and its resultant moral and mental development would be gone—much is preventable and much due to that evil and self-seeking commerce it is the aim of our Brotherhood to replace by one with nobler aims; and if I have learnt little I have at least unlearnt a good many fallacies concerning that ghastly spectre at this long-prepared feast of refined luxury and widespread enjoyment that we call civilization. And those who live at the various London settlements have unlearnt more than they have learnt in the same way, as I gather from scattered hints. Legislation will not exorcise that awful spectre, but it may pave the way to lessening some of its evils. That settlements will and do help—every one in this room acknowledges.”

“Then why do you give up a life on settlement lines among the body labourers?”

“Because it is the only way open to me. To be secretary to Stainer-Wilmot is both an apprenticeship to public life and a profession in itself. I am convinced that I can be of more use and do less harm as

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a secretary than as a casual labourer. That is all my defence."

He stepped back into the shadow, and the room was filled with loud and animated debate, ending at last in a vote accepting the justification by a small majority, after which the work of the sitting proceeded tranquilly.

"It's an odd thing," Airedale said afterwards, when he turned out with Bassett under the tree-shadows in the dimly lighted square, "that if you had come in morning clothes—any careless kind of kit—their backs would not have been put up to that extent."

"Very likely. As it is, they would have chucked me out but for you and George to back me up. It's the old, ascetic respect for dirt. I haven't been clean for more than five minutes together for two years till now, and it's a small Heaven to me to be properly groomed at last."

"It would be a good-sized hell to some of Dickie Housman's pets, Bass."

"But I am a thorough hedonist, Jim; I can't soar to Dickie's heights. The cult of the coster and the hooligan is beyond me. Even to hear decent slang again and the upper class misuse of the King's English is rapture; and voices without a cockney twang are celestial symphonies."

"Dickie hates 'em with their h's on and no r's after their vowels. A ripping old boy. Next to the devil he hates respectability."

Dickie had indeed been one of those who refused absolution to Bassett on his lapse to the occupations and dress of his class. He remained after the Brotherhood had melted out of Grimsby's rooms in high debate on the subject. Grimsby had very pointedly shown that a continuous working-man's life was incompatible with the sociological literature Bassett was producing in increasing volume and power, and by which the Reflector and the Brotherhood were constantly recruited;

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for affiliated societies were already beginning in provincial centres. But Coster Dick was inconsolable.

"It was so ideal—so stimulating and uplifting," he sighed; "and it did so help a chap through the trivial round, to think of our golden lad leading that bare and pinched life."

"Well! but we can't all be costers," Grimsby objected.

"Perhaps not," was the sorrowful concession; "but our golden lad could. Meeting him was like tumbling into a living chapter out of the gospels. And then to see him to-night in that immaculate West-End rig. There was a distinct waft of soap and scent in the room."

"What? Above the baccy?" Grimsby chuckled. "But, after all, Dickie, there's no actual vice in soap; cleanliness isn't a deadly sin. And of course you couldn't see the hair shirt under the white linen."

"Could you? Really? Next the skin?" was the eager rejoinder.

"Deeper than that, Dickie. Next the heart."

"Ah! h'm! Good night, Grim."

After they were gone, Grimsby sat long in the window, looking at the stars and nourishing great hopes. He saw the Brotherhood, now the tiniest, laughing, leaping rillet, running with many a divergent loop and meandering coil and tranquil backwater, gathering volume and strength till it rolled, a mighty river, through all the waste places of this present arid civilization, quickening them to Eden freshness and fertility. That was Bassett's dream; and the way to its fulfilment, briefly sketched in Bassett's handwriting, lay among the wordy legal documents upon Grimsby's desk. Bassett would not belie that dream because he had returned to the class none of the rest had ever deserted. And those three years in those "Depths," of which he wrote so eloquently, were a pretty fair test of sincerity. Besides, he had actually and literally sold all he had and given to the poor, and was, even now, in that much-criticized garb of civili-

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zation, earning his bare subsistence with hard and strenuous labour both of brain and body.

So Grimsby mused and dreamed in the pale glimmer of summer stars, while the man of whom he mused, having met and primed his chief with the necessary information, worked on in his well-stored library far into the summer dawn, collecting, sorting, and tabulating from volumes of solid lore, all that was necessary to know upon a subject to be laid before the House next day.

CHAPTER VII

ISOBEL BEFORE HER HUSBAND

HIGH noon of the day following the historic reception at Midshire House had come and gone and found Isobel Aynesworth still fast asleep in her hushed and darkened room in Park Lane. Aynesworth, who possessed the iron nerve and untiring energy necessary to a working statesman, had taken his usual morning ride and done half a day's work by the time the sun reached the meridian.

At about two o'clock he came in to luncheon and found a solitary table, at sight of which his brows drew sharply together.

"Her ladyship lunching out?" he asked.

"Her ladyship is not down yet, my lord," the man replied.

Aynesworth's brows drew still more closely together; he sent a message to Isobel's maid, and the reply came that her ladyship still slept.

He ate what had been put on his plate slowly and without appetite, with a red gleam gathering in his eyes, took some mineral water, and was about to refuse, but changed his mind and took from, a dish handed to him, lest he should seem too much perturbed to eat.

That being very deliberately disposed of, a carriage was ordered for a certain hour and some instructions were given to a secretary who had just come in. Then Lord Aynesworth went upstairs, reflecting that a man in office

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has no time for emotions, and wishing that family affairs could be transacted by machinery and domestic crises postponed at least till the session was over, if not till the Opposition came in.

The impression left upon his mind by the incident of the waiting-room was vivid, blurred though it necessarily was by the importance of the communication of which Stainer-Wilmot's secretary was the bearer. That a secretary should be sent at such a time and to such a place showed sufficient urgency to put his mind on the alert for what might be impending in consequence of the Russian difficulty and the present untimely Turkish entanglement. And in the midst of all this, when he had succeeded, without violation of etiquette or any slightest awkwardness, in digesting the fact of the secretary's errand and detaching himself from a really weighty and impressive talk with one of his father's most politically important guests, and hurrying unobserved from a supper-room to the library, the unexpected complication of the scene that met his eyes in the waiting-room had been no little shock even to his adamant nerves. That Bassett had become secretary to Stainer-Wilmot was unknown to him; he was not even aware that he had returned from the long seclusion that had had almost the obliterating effect of death on people's memories; moreover, he was expecting to see a face very familiar to him as a secretary of Stainer-Wilmot.

But if the sudden apparition of the forgotten Bassett was unexpected, still more was that of Isobel, whose glimmering, unrecognized figure he had watched stealing cat-like through shrubs and shadowy paths by the library windows, when he hurried to the ante-room, with little space in his mind for more than a passing wonder as to why the ghost-like figure was gliding so stealthily from the thronged and lighted grounds, whence confused sounds of music and the faint hum of many voices were fitfully wafted. And even when the face of the expected

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secretary was recognized as that of Adrian Bassett, round whose disappearance a few years since so much legend and conjecture had been woven and forgotten, and the cry of "Adrian" announced an acute dramatic moment in two lives, and suggested that he was by some mistake interrupting a planned meeting in which he had no part, the face of the shimmering, phantom figure being hidden and tiaras of diamond and ropes of pearl common as daisies in spring that evening, the fact that the impassioned cry came from the lips of Isobel was slow to present itself, and, when actually realized, struck home with a shock all the more severe. Yet a moment later it seemed as if he had known it long and had been hourly expecting such a climax all through their married life.

What he said in the passion of the moment he could not clearly recall, except that almost by instinct his hand had touched a knob that flooded the room with the hard brilliance of white light and showed the two embraced figures erect and put apart as by a spring; neither of the three ever quite knew what passed in that wild moment. There was some memory of a strong effort to recapture the calm impassiveness long habit had wrought to second nature, and of a few brief and icy words that seared the flesh of the heart like molten iron. There was a sense of misery, horror, and despair unutterable in a woman's burning eyes and paling face, and of a man's steady resonant voice, with a restrained quiver in it, coolly apologizing for a slight and accidental inconvenience.

"I'm afraid I startled Lady Aynsworth appearing so suddenly out of the darkness."

"No doubt. And Lady Aynsworth's unexpected appearance must have been equally startling to Mr. Bassett," was the icily urbane rejoinder.

"Almost. But I had the advantage of having seen a lady's dress glitter in the garden lights first before she crossed the window-sill."

"I was so tired—I stole away for a moment's quiet and

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darkness, away from the people," a woman's strained voice said wearily.

"Mr. Stainer-Wilmot's errand is rather pressing," the man's voice added, somewhat abruptly; and Aynsworth, recalled to the business that brought him there, turned sharply, summoning his full attention to the matter in hand; while Isobel, she knew not how, got herself quickly and unobserved from the room.

That was all that had passed in a few scorchingly vivid moments, that threatened to leave indelible scars on three lives. The "rather pressing" errand was sufficiently so to expel all personal consciousness from the well-trained mind of the Minister of the Crown, for at least the time necessary to meet its exigencies and consider it in all its bearings. Then followed the imperative necessity of writing an immediate and carefully worded reply, and the instant departure of the secretary with that and some verbal additions and explanations, and after that his own delayed return to the crowded rooms, in which the hostess appeared to be playing her part with her usual propriety and charm.

"Her ladyship is still asleep," said the maid, stepping before the closed door of Isobel's room and placing her hand on the door handle, as if to bar his passage, with a look of mingled fear and revolt not lost upon the marquis, who simply strode on, waving her aside in a manner that told her the futility of opposition; though she held on stoutly to the handle till personal removal appeared imminent, with an imploring "Indeed, my lord——" quickly silenced by finding herself alone on the wrong side of a door locked from within.

"The woman is in this," her master reflected as he turned the key.

The room was so heavily shadowed by blinds and curtains that at first it seemed quite dark, and he stumbled over furniture while striding with no softened step to the bed, whence he drew back a curtain at the head with a

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sharp clash of rings on their metal rod, and a call that met with no response from the prone figure in the bed, still too heavily shadowed for objects near and upon it to be distinguished. Another clash of rings on the window curtain-rod let in light enough to show an empty glass upon a small table at the bed's head. Taking it to the light, he saw that it had contained a dark fluid with a drug-like smell. Flowers drooped in vases about the room; the withered shower-bouquet of last night was thrown in its jewelled holder on a chair; on the dressing-table a rod of sunshine intensified the glitter of a mass of heaped jewels, and touched the shining folds of the gala dress flung upon a sofa and trailing over the carpet. From the bed came neither sign nor sound, except the sleeper's breathing, which was a little thick and difficult.

"Open your eyes, Isobel," he said in cool, level tones close to her ear. The eyelids quivered slightly as if with an effort to shut tighter; he noticed a purplish shadow beneath the lower lids, a pinched blueness about the lips, and a vague greyiness over all of the face the tossed and tangled hair left visible in the hollow of the laced pillow; all the beauty and vivid charm of her was under heavy eclipse; even the bare arm thrown out on the coverlet in a gesture of unrest had lost its clear, azure-lined whiteness and showed purplish veins in a greyish dead colour, while the very outlines of the figure distinguishable under the clothes had lost all grace in a crouched discomfort.

Passing one arm under her shoulders and with the other stacking a couple of pillows behind her, he raised her to a sitting posture that compelled her to open her eyes and look with dazed and filmed vision heavily and stupidly before her.

"You'll do this once too often," he said coolly, dashing clear water in her face. Then, going to the door, whence the listening maid was fleeing precipitately, he ordered her to bring black coffee in a breakfast-cup at once.

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"My head," Isobel moaned, drowsily putting up her arms and trying to stay the throbbing of her temples with hot shaking hands.

"A most revolting spectacle," he commented, in the cold, sharp staccato that never failed to cut her to the quick. "The degradation of Isobel Aynesworth, sister of the notorious Biddy Mostyn."

"What do you mean?" she faltered, the cloud in her heavy eyes thinning and a light of fear and pain piercing her dizzy brain.

"It kills sooner than whisky," he went on, holding the empty glass before her; "it paralyses the will more completely and permanently; it destroys intellect more rapidly, more painfully and irrecoverably. Nothing ruins beauty more utterly."

"Go away; leave me alone, Reginald," she muttered, less thickly than before. "I want sleep, I am ill and worn out."

"I have suspected it for some time," he continued; "but I am at a loss to know when it began." He sprinkled eau-de-Cologne on her delicate laces and embroidered silken coverlet and held smelling-salts to her nostrils. "The end of it is death, through despair and madness worse than death. Your nerve is gone. My father had to apologize for your disappearance when you were most needed last night. You were not once yourself, and no wonder."

"I was sorry to be so unwell last night," she murmured, fighting against the deadly stupor that weighed her eyelids and dizzied her brain. "Let me be."

"Unwell! unwell!" The sharp and acrid contempt in the voice cut deep and made her quiver for all her drowsy deadness. She made no reply, but with great effort raised the heavy head falling forwards on her breast, and looked miserably through hazed, half-closed eyes in his face, which seemed cut in cold steel. There was silence for some seconds, broken only by a furtive tap at

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the door announcing the coffee, which he took in quickly and, relocking the door, made her drink.

"Unwell!" he repeated, stabbing her with the same cold tones of concentrated, envenomed contempt, that scorched her very soul as she lay helpless in the steely blaze of his hard eyes, all her beauty clouded and charm eclipsed, and he let himself go without pity and without pause.

Lord Aynesworth's clear and classic oratory sometimes erred on the side of too much restraint, though vigour was seldom wanting to it. As a rule it was a little cold and calculated, but on occasion he could let himself go with a fire and a verve that were all the more telling by contrast, and loose a flood of bitter irony, fierce scorn, and hot indignation, that his full and fluent diction, apt imagery, and perfect mastery of expression combined to make intolerably scathing. On those occasions the House waked up; individual members sometimes set their teeth with a dangerous gleam in their eyes, while others shrank within themselves in hopeless, helpless collapse.

Isobel had listened to one such fulminant behind the bars of the Ladies' cage with inward quaking and instinctive joy of the bars; it recalled her first childish experience of lions roaring after their meat.

To-day, in the wholesale physical and mental and moral misery of gradual, partial emergence from narcotic stupor, she felt as if she were being beaten all over with burning iron rods, so that no whole part was left in her, and wondered vaguely at the cold savagery of the man with the blazing eyes towering above her at the foot of the bed, with gestures that sometimes shook it. She wondered that he spared her nothing, and perhaps he wondered a little himself, afterwards; it floated through her sickened brain that he was making it impossible for them to live together any more. She said nothing, partly from inability to find words, partly from wounded pride,

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and partly from sheer surprise at the things imputed to her.

When he had finished he searched for and found a phial, that from which the draught had been poured, and put it in his pocket. He also routed out some hypodermic syringes and impounded them. Then he handsomely paid and told the trembling maid to leave at once, gave some orders to the second tiring-woman with a day's notice to leave, and sprang into the waiting carriage, writing as he went a note to Isobel's medical attendant. A scalding wetness in his eyes made writing difficult; and when he had finished the thought of all her beauty and bright wit and laughing charm and sweetness came over him in such sharp contrast with the helpless, dishevelled stupor, livid face, and apathetic eyes, with such pain and shame and pity and disappointment, that he could have cried like a child. But there was no time. Already overdue at the House, where a communication of some gravity was to be made, he delivered his message amid ministerial cheers and Opposition questions, bearing himself throughout the sitting in a way that roused no suspicion of the domestic scene just enacted. Possibly even he might not have been able to recover self-possession and throw himself so completely into the questions before the House if he had realized the gravity of the crisis he had battled through that day.

That he was not aware of the catastrophe his strong measures averted was clear to Isobel, through all the confusion and heaviness of her whirling brain; though she knew of his discovery of the syringe under her pillow. But by the time the doctor arrived at Park Lane some half or three-quarters of an hour later, she was in no condition to refuse to see him, as she most certainly would have done had she not again lapsed into unconsciousness, that was half coma and half the wretched numbness of drugged sleep.

Pushing aside all servants and meeting their protest,

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that her ladyship was still in her room, with the rejoinder that that was exactly why Lord Aynesworth had asked him to call, the physician ran upstairs to the room he knew, and, without ceremony, took the guardian maid by her shoulders, sent her spinning down the corridor, and broke noisily into the room. A brief examination of the narcotized patient showed some tiny pricks in the under part of the upper arm, newly made.

"But why?" he asked himself, his trained eye taking in the too familiar symptoms in a moment. "No mistake about this; no accident."

In a few seconds attendants had been called in, a nurse telephoned for, and severe and uncompromising treatment brought to bear upon the poor marchioness, whose return to consciousness was slow and gradual and infinitely painful and undignified. And when Aynesworth returned for five minutes snatched from affairs about dusk, he found a white-aproned lady in command of a room that had become as near an imitation of a hospital ward as circumstances permitted, and under her care in hopeless, helpless captivity, a miserably suffering and exhausted patient, whom it was difficult to recognize as the brilliant and beautiful political hostess of the night before, whose portrait and costume were already being prepared to accompany ecstatic letterpress in forthcoming female illustrated journals.

"Going on favourably," was the nurse's report. "Ladies are very rash in meddling with these things," she said consolingly; "so easy to make a mistake, especially if tired out or in pain."

"Women are not perhaps as fond of pain as they used to be—at least, in fiction," he commented.

"Well! Not society ladies. Nothing like pain to make people ugly and frumpish. Not that *this* patient could ever be quite that." Her poor ladyship reduced to the level of "this patient"!

He gave the nurse one of his steady, piercing looks,

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wondering how much she knew and deciding that she knew all and more.

"You are a mental nurse with a speciality?" he asked.

"Yes, I've a large experience in the morphia habit. It means having eyes in the back of one's head," she replied, with a complacent smile, "and a good share of will power."

"Tell me the truth," he urged; "is this an old, confirmed habit?"

She looked steadily in his face for a second before replying, "Not from appearances. But—we were only just in time. The danger now is colliapse," she added. "All depends on the amount of rallying power," and he observed that except for that one second her eyes never swerved from the patient on the distant bed, whither their low-toned conversation could not penetrate.

"Danger. There was still danger, yet she was going on favourably," he mused, with a bitter pang. And then the thought crossed his mind that if, after all, she sank, it would be without scandal or loss of dignity, with all due observance and attendance of doctors and nurses, and then perhaps—yes, perhaps it might on the whole be well—especially well for that child with the long string of names at the top of the house, if she did sink out of her tangled life. But the night passed, and the second nurse, going off duty in the morning, gave a better report, and the doctor's early visit found her out of danger.

"And now the worst begins," Aynesworth reflected, and the doctor's face silently confirmed the unspoken thought, which echoed through the heart of the unfortunate young woman returning to a life she had begun to loathe.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM SLUMLAND TO PARK LANE

ORIEL HALL was not without some suggestion of the exquisite piece of medieval architecture at Oxford its name recalled. It was built round three sides of a quadrangle, the fourth side of which was separated from a warehouse yard by a high wall and some outhouses, masked by an avenue of trees, hardly as yet more than saplings, but precious in that desert of overcrowded streets and lanes and barrack-like buildings of many stories, reached from outside by cranes, that creaked and rattled from morning to night.

The gateway facing the dingy street was flanked by a pair of turrets and surmounted by an oriel window not without charm and suggestion. The interior of the gateway was vaulted and groined; the gates were iron-studded oak, not often closed, but protected by outer iron grilles never opened except by the porter. Looking through these iron-grated valves, those who passed had a pleasant and inviting vision, first of the vaulted gateway with its porter's hatch, frescoed walls, and arched doorways, and then of the quadrangle, closed by the youthful avenue opposite, which offered the cool verdure of turf, brightness of flower-border, and cheerfulness of garden seats, and on one side a veritable cloister facing south. A jet of water leaving a basin in the centre and falling back with a soft, pattering murmur, glittering in sunlight or moonshine or its stagy mockery of electric glare, finished a picture of peace and refreshment. Here

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the Settlement gave its garden parties on summer-evenings and Sunday afternoons ; and here sometimes bands played, small flower-shows were held, and children were set to play among the few hardy survivors of many blossoming plants.

On workaday afternoons the quadrangle was mostly deserted, save for a few of the resident ladies reading or gardening, or in fine weather drinking tea. On this particular summer afternoon, except for a mothers' meeting in the cloister, where tea was being served, the little oasis of verdure was empty and only crossed at intervals by inmates coming and going on various errands.

The face of Adrian Bassett was not unfamiliar to the frequenters of the Hall. He was among those who sometimes gave, or helped to give, conversational lectures meant to bring various lore within the grasp of untaught and scantily furnished minds, or helped in the simple and popular entertainments when masculine aid was held to be desirable. Some such function being about to take place at Oriel Hall, the male settlement of which it was the complement had told him off as a helper, and he had called to take instructions from the head. This duty performed, he had lingered in the drawing-room, in which visitors of either sex came and went according as they found, or failed to find, what they sought, whether society or information.

"I have half an hour to spare," he told Blanche, who had conveyed his message to the absent head ; " couldn't you come into the quad for a second ? "

" More Utopia ? " she asked, when they passed into the sunlit greenness and paced the thinly shaded avenue. " I have found a name for your Utopia, Adrian—Brothersland—and an idea concerning advertising."

" Brothersland ? Yes, but hardly comprehensive enough. As for the people who advertise, there is only one way. Hang them without trial ; make the offence capital."

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"There is much to be said for hanging, a captivating simplicity in the method. It strikes me that your penal code will be like good poetry—simple, sensuous, and passionate—your justice will be truly poetic, in short. A clean sweep of the stage. But what is to be done with motor-cars?"

"Equally simple—every casualty manslaughter—even if it's only a hen run over—and no respect of persons. Oh! I'd have a short way with stinkpots."

"Ah! there's a shorter and simpler way. Make them carry their dust and stench in front instead of behind."

"Well, why not? With their precious mechanical inventions, their annihilations of space and time, why can't they annihilate a little dust and a few stinks? The poor Utopia is rather at a standstill just now. In this unholy rush there is little time to dream over it. We won't admit these flying stinkpots to the Golden Rule's Utopia, Blanche, because they destroy dreams. And dreams are what men live by—the food of souls."

There was preoccupation in his unseeing gaze and uncertain manner; evidently he had not drawn her into the quadrangle to talk over the Utopian dreams, built on Brotherhood principles, that he was known to be bringing into shape.

"Have the Brotherhood condoned your profligate indulgence in soap yet? Or do they still hold that those who wear clean linen live in thieves' houses, and that all wisdom is hidden under beards?"

"I underwent a great purgation before the tribunal last week. But some of them still hold me as a heathen man and a plutocrat, especially dear old Dickie. You are very wise, Blanche; you never lose touch with the world you were born in. I notice that you go back into the thick of it, as often as you can. But you didn't—you didn't go to that Midshire House show."

"Not quite. Gorgeous could have been no word for it."

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"You can't think what an outsider one feels at first plunge back—a sort of Rip Van Winkle sense, a left-behind and stranded kind of stupidity, comes over one. And, well, there's only one way, a short way, with temptation, and that's a clean run."

"Into the shadow of a monastery? That is the accepted—the cosy, the comfortable way. Go, get thee to a cloister, poor frail Bassett. No temptations in the wilderness of slumland, the devil never even heard of there."

"Not the one with the angel-face, the sweetest, the most alluring of them all. Blanche, what is there in you that demoralizes one so hopelessly? Do you pamper everybody's egoism as you do mine?"

"Hardly necessary, as a rule. Of all the sturdy and indomitable weaknesses incident to humanity, this of egoism stands least in need of cossetting."

"Well," he sighed, "the fear of meeting her is over for a time, at least."

"Her? Ah!"—in the thin shadow the clear pallor of her face was faintly suffused—"the sweetest, the most alluring of them all," she thought. "So you did meet?" she asked.

"It—I—it was a shock. She—of course she would be just a little startled the first time. People forget completely, and the more completely things are forgotten and out of mind the more disconcerting it is to be brought—suddenly, without the slightest warning, face to face with—with past things. I was waiting for Aynsworth in a half-lighted room—at Midshire House, that night. I had waited a few minutes, my head full of what brought me there, and was sitting in a dark corner looking absently into the lighted grounds through a window opposite, when there was a faint shimmering whiteness, and a figure in rustling silks glided into the room. I saw her face, Blanche, sweet but pale, pale and weary, and not, oh! *not* happy, and like a fool, an *infernal* fool, shot out of

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my corner into the light. Then I heard my name and there was a dead weight in my arms."

"Fainting?"

"Or startled—Heaven knows—but a dead weight for a moment, even if it was only a stumble in the dark."

"And then?" Blanche, sitting at his side, looked straight before her at the fountain's sunlit spray.

"Then," he replied slowly, "Aynesworth appeared through the opposite door."

"Aynesworth? Adrian! But he expected you?"

"He expected a secretary from Stainer-Wilmot."

A sparrow hopped on the basin's rim, sipped and fluttered its wings in the fountain spray that bubbled and plashed melodiously in a brief silence between the harsh creak of warehouse cranes and shriek of iron dragged over stone; the thin foliage rustled above them in a little welcome breeze, and was still.

"What came next," he said, "Heaven only knows. But nothing unseemly. "In a very short time—the room was empty—that is, he and I were alone and immersed in the business that took me there. After all, Aynesworth is at least a gentleman."

"*Though* a nobleman—rich but refined. Lord Aynesworth is also a statesman and a man of firm and fine character—poor man!"

He turned upon her fiercely. "He makes her wretched," he cried; "he has a vicious mouth and a nasty eye."

"I would rather have him as friend than enemy. Yet a very passable husband might be carved out of him with patience. No doubt whatever passing awkwardness or misconception this unlucky scene may have produced is quite effaced from his mind by this time. He would easily see that it was accidental and natural."

"Would he?" He leant forward, his arms laid on his knees, his eyes perusing the dusty asphalt at his feet,

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his head down. "Would he?—I didn't know," he added, "didn't dream what it would be to see her again—face to face like that—to be suddenly in the charm, the intoxication, of her presence again. Of course, I never did, and never could, forget her—who could?—but—the rush, the thrill—the overwhelmingness——" Oh, Blanche, I abuse your patience, your friendship."

"No, no," she murmured in such a tone that he looked up and surprised tears in her eyes: "Go on, dear, say what you like, you poor, foolish moth."

"No, Blanche, I'm not going to flutter in the flame—I won't dim its clearness or even singe my wretched wings in its glow. If moths flutter they blur lights. Oh, Blanche, you've known the whole story—poem it was—from the beginning. And you are *her* friend——"

"Not the rose—but near her. A faint echo of the song—a lingering perfume of the supreme sweetness——"

"You were with her on that first divine day—do you remember?"

"Don't I? She said you were a faun." A little weariness and irony in the voice escaped his notice.

"What days those were, and what nights! The masque in the gardens; that dance in the College Hall—it stands out from all the other dances. And that Sunday afternoon in the garden, with the bells—I forget if you were there. What a fresh, joyous, spiritual, and spirited creature she was! The grace of her—moving like a dream—the heart-music in her laugh—all the enthusiasm, the poetry, the love of ideas, embodied in that marvellous and pure type of beauty. And with her keen and delicate intellect, wholesome views of things, her innate power and princeliness, and that swift, intuitive perception that is more than all knowledge and all wisdom, a love of simple things and sympathy with homely lives. Such a regal nature! And then——"

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"And then to go and marry a market gardener—I mean a marquis——"

"Blanche!"

"My poor moth!"

"Oh! Blanche, but the pity, the pity of it! The wan and weary woman—a queen of women still—I saw that night was not the creature of fire and air and poetry and dream and pure joyousness, who danced in those medieval halls and fluttered like a living jewel through those college gardens with us—not, not the sweet, unworldly girl who was to have been my—wife, my *happy* wife, she would, she should have been——"

"All in that minute you saw so much change?"

"Oh! I saw it first on the wedding day—I was there—in the crowd—on lamp-posts. And I saw it on those nights when she went to great functions—State balls—gala operas—courts—all jewels and flowers and brave attire; and—passing in and passing out of political places at night—I've watched her from wet pavements. She never saw me, of course. I was safe in *my* disguise—except, perhaps, on the wedding day, when our eyes met and she was visibly startled, probably by some vague suggestion or memory of the man who loved her and won her love—for I had *that*, had it and lost it. Sometimes it seems criminal to have lost that supreme and unparalleled gift; again I often think it was inevitable, but always own that it was hard upon her, in her golden, gifted youth, to have to face such an alternative. I came into her life only to trouble and injure it. Not that she has not long ago overlived whatever pang that parting may have cost her; yet I wish I had never crossed that sweet and sunny path of hers; so that she might have given her first and last love to one more worthy and suitable. But what can have altered her so terribly? No, not life, Blanche—life develops; it brings out, not alters. There is some radical change—is it the shadow of that hard and cynic

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nature, of the world-worn man at her hearth, whom she does not love ? ”

“ Poor man ! you are unjust to him. He is much attached to her——”

“ Oh ! in a way, doubtless. As he is attached to his houses and lands, his power and his rank. I could give her up, I did give her up, I could bear that, and still rejoice that this earth was the fairer for her bright and sweet presence. But the unbearable pain is that she herself is *gone*—the innocent, gracious loveliness of her, the unsullied charm, the gaiety and hope, all lost. Where is the radiant, ideal being who melted into my dream that summer afternoon ? Where is the Isobel who made my youth one long and lovely and inspiring poem ? ”

“ There,” she replied, lightly touching him on the breast ; “ the Isobel Mostyn we both knew and loved is buried there, embalmed in fragrant memories and sweet thoughts. There she will always live, an imperishable presence, as long as the heart beats.”

He took the hand lightly fluttering over his heart, bowed over, kissed, and released it.

“ Always,” he assented, still looking at the asphalt and unconscious of the sudden crimson suffusing the pale face at his side. “ Cold comfort though at the best. But the true, the ideal, Isobel *may* emerge again, when her children gather round her, who knows ?—if she recovers, that is.”

“ Recovers ? ”

“ Well, there is always danger of a relapse, and the doctor’s ‘ out of danger ’ is sometimes only the prelude to the last act. Perhaps you have seen her, or at least had the last report——”

“ What are you talking of ? Belle is not ill, that I am aware of.”

“ Oh ! Blanche, didn’t you know ? That reception at the end of a long strain was too much for her. She was taken ill that night—nervous prostration they call

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it—there was danger, but they say it is past. It must have been brain fever at first, so people think. She looked like a ghost that night.”

“Why that was nearly a week ago—five days—I’ve not been west since. There has been a fearful rush here as we are short-handed. No, I had heard nothing. Oh! I must go to her at once.”

It was small comfort to learn that Isobel had seen no one yet, that Park Lane was deep in straw, bells and knockers muffled, and strict quiet enjoined.

“And I must leave you with half a story,” she sighed; “my time is up, I am due in Bermondsey in half an hour.”

“And my time is overstepped too,” looking at his watch and hurrying across the quadrangle with such dispatch that the form of leave-taking was omitted till the fountain was passed, when he turned, remembering, raised his hat with a little deprecating nod, and vanished through the arched gateway, before Blanche had time to run in and get her hat and notes for the Bermondsey lecture.

“Now I know,” she mused bitterly, as she threaded the hot streets to the tram-car; “I know the depth and origin of his friendship for me. I am and was *her* friend—nothing more. Not even his friendship is mine, nothing, only the pale reflection of her that he fancies he sees in me. He will love her for ever and ever, nothing will ever destroy that enchantment—nothing, not even if he knew—what he will never guess. She is all his youth, steeped in the colour of his dreams, dyed in hues of his first-romance. Poor dazzled, blinded moth! Well, after all, even Aynesworth is blind to one thing—Heaven keep him so.”

Yet Adrian was vaguely troubled by that interview in the quadrangle. The hand his lips had touched was overwhite and transparent, weariness had been in the eyes and voice, and yet that subtle thing, the family likeness recalling Isobel, had been unusually apparent. Where was that likeness? Not in colour, form, or feature;

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was it a look, a gesture, an inflexion of voice, a trick of speech? The elusive thing was everywhere and nowhere. Might it be the common inheritance of nicely balanced nerve strength too easily overwrought? There was without doubt a distinct aroma of Isobel in Blanche. And each in her widely different way was overtaxed by the demands of her life. Women's lives should be sheltered. The archdeacon should know about Blanche.

Blanche, in the meantime, arranged her work straightway with a fellow worker so that she might go west, and presented herself next day at Park Lane, where she found straw laid and a doctor's report attached to a tied knocker. The door yielded on slight pressure, disclosing a low-voiced servant, whose murmured replies forbade all access to the patient, who had not seen even her mother yet. Blanche was about to turn away when Aynesworth crossed the hall, and, seeing her, drew her silently into a room near the entrance, then, silently pressing her hand and leading her to a seat, sat down himself, apparently too much overcome for words.

"So bad as that?" she thought, observing the haggard dejection of his face and the fatigued lines about his eyes.

"I am glad you came," he said, after some gentle commonplaces from her to give him time to pull himself together. "You have influence with her. Use it."

"Influence? And she so ill?"

"Ill? It's morphia. Drink—drugs—the same tendency is in all, I suppose—the bad drop in the Coverdale blood, the craving for excitement, the lust for violent emotions."

"Are you sure of this morphia, Lord Aynesworth?"

"Did you never suspect, Miss Ingram?"

They looked silently and sadly in each other's eyes a moment, and in the next Blanche found herself in a darkened room, alone with a death-pale woman, who received her with a little cry and a burst of tears.

She was lying in a deep chair, half lost in daintiest webs of lace, the waves of her beautiful hair brushed

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simply from her face and gathered into two thick plaits that hung below her waist; a sort of weary despair was in her drawn and haggard face, that lighted up at the sight of Blanche.

"Where is that dreadful woman?" she asked presently, lifting her wet face from the friendly arm that pillowed and soothed it, and looking round with a terrified, anxious gaze; "she's always lurking about somewhere, night and day, ready to spring upon me. They call her a nurse. Always watching and prying—one can't so much as breathe in privacy—a female warder I believe she is."

Blanche assured her that they were alone, the nurse having gone away on purpose to give them privacy. She stroked Isobel's bright silky hair, laid fresh roses before her, and soothed her like a child.

"And now tell me all about it," she said. "What led you to this monstrous folly?"

"I wanted to die," she sighed. "Oh, Blanche, I *wanted* to die and have done with it all. I could bear it no longer. Only think, all of a sudden, without a moment's warning, when I was sick with the longing a silly song of his had wakened in me, sick of longing for him, sick of all this glittering, pinchbeck life of artificiality and intrigue, sick to death of it all, out from the shadows in a dark room I was entering, out *he* sprang into the light, his very self as he used to be, without any disguise. He caught me off my guard and took me in his arms—as if we had never parted—as if in some happy dream. Blanche, I felt his heart beat loud and quick under my face, and longed to die there and then of the old sweetness. Oh, Blanche, Blanche," she sobbed, clinging like a hurt child to the sheltering arms, "why did he leave me? why did I let him go? I want nothing but him, him only and always. I loved him from the first minute—the very first. With him I could be happy in a coal-mine, a slum, anywhere. But I thought when I left him that I wanted more—I wanted to shine and be in

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the thick of it all, and move men and be worshipped. And now I'm sick of shining and worship and the weariness of constant feigning, and of penetrating and sifting motives and characters, and the strain of trying to play the complaisant wife—to a man with the heart of a nether millstone."

"There is no such man in this house, Belle; there is only an anxious, sorrowful, shamed man, whose heart is wounded and his name shadowed by the mad folly of the woman he chose to bear it."

"What folly?" asked Isobel, suddenly raising her head with a proud defiance; "what slander has he dared tell you of me?"

"Only what I have feared and guessed for a long time, my poor dear."

"So you are in the conspiracy," she said, pushing her away and turning wearily in her chair. "And that's why you are admitted to my dungeon, where I am starved and watched and drugged, and isolated from every creature who cares for me. You can go."

"Belle dear, when and why did you begin this terrible habit?"

"I didn't. Leave me." She turned away again.

"I noticed it first in the early spring."

"And told Reginald and set him upon me!" she retorted fiercely.

"You know that I am incapable of anything of the kind, Belle. I didn't admit it, even to myself, for a long time. I thought it might be a temporary and exceptional thing—medical treatment. There had been a little influenza then. Afterwards, when I could no longer refuse to believe it, I tried to bring myself to urge you to give it up; but I was a coward. I thought of poor Biddy—Belle dear, isn't that a warning? This is much the same, only more deadly. The bad drop in the Coverdale blood."

"H'm! How does it come out in you, Miss Prim?"

"Oh! I work it off in slumming—at present."

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"I can't slum. Oh! Blanche, if Reginald had but left me alone that day—I was nearly gone—nobody would have been troubled any more by me and my misery. I had taken enough—quite enough. And after he had roused me forcibly from merciful sleep, and left me all scorched and flayed and quivering from his brutal violence—that man can hit hard—I took more—I had it hidden where even he could not find it. But even the luxury of death is denied me. The things he said—dragging me back from the grave on purpose to torture me! That man is a fiend of cruelty; you don't know him; *you* were never married to him. Oh! the hard, cold savagery of him. Jealous, too, jealous of the man who had never seen or written to me since the day we parted—until that night, for that one moment, in Reginald's sight. The insults he heaped on me, the vile imputations! Never, never will I live with him again. Oh! you need not ask what drove me to deaden the agony, to take that merciful peace-giver. I couldn't bear it, Blanche, I couldn't face the cold, correct, cruel civility of the creature who owned me and wore me as presently he'll wear his peer's robes and his coronet, and used me to further his ambition, as he uses every one who falls in his way."

"Poor Lord Aynesworth! His very virtues are crimes to his wife."

"His virtues are detestable and his vices are quite as bad."

"Belle dear, he is most unfortunate in his choice of a wife."

"His blood is on his own head. He knew all. I told him I could never care for any one else—that he must expect nothing beyond friendship. He knew that I was marrying his rank and wealth and political and intellectual distinction."

"Did he get that friendship? Belle darling, you have

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behaved abominably to this poor man, your own baby's father."

"I've made a hopeless mess of my life, Blanche, if you like. Oh! you can't imagine the maddening misery of perpetually seeing an unloved man in the place of the beloved. Impossible not to hate the usurper. I rather liked poor Reginald before I married him. He is one of the most distinguished men of his age, perhaps the most forceful and active influence in the whole country. He is recognized abroad as the one personality to be reckoned with here."

"His wife has an enviable position. As high probably as that of any royal woman in Europe."

"If only Adrian had died," Isobel mused sadly; "death is so irrevocable, so final. Or even married. But to know always that he was there—somewhere—wronged and faithful. For I feel that he can no more forget me than I him. His nature is loyal, constant, noble. Oh! it was no light, unconsidered passion that bound us, no sudden heat of youth, or fervour of imagination. The lifelong happiness we might have had! Blanche, dear, I sometimes think that this consuming and hopeless agony, this vain longing for what might have been but for one's own folly, is the fire of hell, the worm that never dies."

"Dear, you must conquer that longing, you must and will. For duty's sake, for your baby's sake, for your own sake, and—for his—Adrian's."

"When he is dying for me as I for him?"

"He is not dying for you or for anybody—he is made of manlier stuff. But you may easily ruin his happiness and spoil his life. He is loyal and honourable and noble and chivalrous—but he is human—and he loves you still—loves you far too well to drag you from your eminence—in his heart. It was he who sent me here to-day and not your husband; he told me of your illness, of which I was ignorant. Isobel, I think the greatest cruelty you

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could do that loyal heart would be to degrade yourself. He has watched you—unseen—and, like others, he has detected the ravages of the secret ulcer that poisons your life. He is far from divining the cause—as yet. But these things cannot be hidden long, and he, in common with all the world, will soon know all, aye, and more than all—for you live in too full a light of publicity to escape either detection or the exaggerations of rumour. Isobel, dear Isobel——”

Suddenly, and to her own great astonishment, Blanche began to cry violently, her face covered by her hands, her head bowed down. Isobel had never seen her like this; it was as if some strong defence upon which she was used to lean had given way.

“Blanchie, Blanchie,” she cried piteously, with timid caresses and pappings, “what is it? Oh, what shall I do?”

The storm passed, and in a few minutes Blanche was her quiet, collected self again, marble-pale, with wet eyelashes and firm, sweet mouth.

“We thought so much of you, Belle,” she sighed, after many lamentations and questionings and caresses from Isobel. “Airedale, Adrian, George Lulworth, mother and I—and it has come to this.”

“Only don’t cry like that again,” Isobel pleaded, “it’s not like you. And you are so thin. What is Aunt Maude thinking about to let you wear yourself to the bone in those horrid, infectious slums? You, who might be so happy.”

“Might I?”

“Why not? with your free, unfettered life, your wide interests and tastes, your love of books and art. And with your pale, passionless nature that defends you from these terrible, emotional storms and wild longings—that *sehnsucht* that Mignon knew, and only such fiery natures as hers know. You have not the fervid Celtic strain of us Mostyns. Think—but you cannot think—you cannot

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imagine, the power and ineradicable passion of a long-rooted love—the perpetual ache of longing, the ever-baffled effort to forget—the long and wearing pain of repression and concealment.”

“Ah! but I can, but I know too well. It is a consuming fire, a long wasting despair, a grey monotony of denial. You are ignorant of that pain, Isobel, you who had years of hope and happiness——”

“Blanche!” cried Isobel suddenly. “You? you who have been marble to so many—you, cold, proud, self-sufficient?”

“Yes, I, who ought to know better. And yet—but never mind my frailties.”

“Is he married?” Isobel asked suddenly. “When did it begin?”

“Oh, one June afternoon years ago.”

“I knew it, oh! I knew it,” Isobel cried, rising from her prone languor in the chair. “I always felt that he should have chosen you; you, who would have made him happy, who thought and felt with him, who were unworldly, and full of dreams and ideas as he is. And but for Airedale it might have been. It will be still. Why, you were always the closest friends, there was closer converse between you two than ever between us two. He went straight from me to you—to-day you come straight from him to me—you were always in touch with him when he disappeared from the rest of the world. Now I know why he made no real effort or sacrifice to keep me.”

“You are mistaken,” Blanche said gently; “he never did or will find anything but a pale reflection of you in me. That is all he wants of me—news of you, talk of you. Because I have been, with you, heard from you, always known and loved you from a little child, I am invested with a faint reflected glamour, that is all. Life is full of these hopeless, heart-searing agonies, Isobel; yet people live and do their duty and are glad, and no

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one ever divines the secret, silent, passionate ache they bear under smiling faces to grey-haired wisdom and cheerful old age. We can't all have the moon. Dear, I have tired you unduly. Let me come again to-morrow?"

She was gone, leaving another atmosphere behind, and, where revolt and despair had been, some rays of hope and some approach to resignation.

"If you wish to save her," Blanche told Aynesworth, "you must be gentle—more gentle than you have been. And you must trust her; put her on her honour. If you try coercion all is lost."

He looked at, or rather through, her with the keen and penetrating glance that had brought confusion to many a frail nature and unmasked many a false one.

"She has doubtless told you her grievances; women always do," he said. "I am a monster of cruelty, and it is all my fault, of course."

"You are a man of unusually keen intellect and intuitive knowledge of character," he heard; "but you don't understand Isobel—or any woman, probably. Right or wrong, Lord Aynesworth, I seriously counsel you to eat humble pie. Whatever you have or haven't done, promise not to do it again."

He laughed and changed the subject.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

"ADRIAN has come to life again," Neville Bassett told his sister about this time; "you meet him at every turn. He's everywhere—a ghastly nuisance."

"Well?" she said, with neither astonishment nor dismay.

"It isn't well at all, Phyllis. It may upset everything. He hasn't been here, has he? Of course, I know that he writes to the old man."

"Uncle Dan's birthday always brings a letter, which usually goes into the fire and presumably receives no answer. Don't be afraid, Neville, Adrian will never have part or lot in any of his father's business matters again."

Uncle Dan at this juncture came on the terrace in front of the Towers, the evening being clear and balmy, and a moon about to rise in a sky still flushed with the glow of a crimson sunset, which ringed the whole horizon with rose.

"I was right in my conjecture," he said; "'From the Depths' is Adrian's work. He edited the Reflector till quite recently, and is still on the staff."

He sighed heavily and paused as if for some expression of sorrow or sympathy on this sad and solemn communication.

"What else could you expect?" Neville presently observed; "hardly a grape from a thorn?"

"I ran against him last night in the lobby," continued Sir Dan, slowly pacing the terrace with Phyllis in face of

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a radiant sky and dusky landscape outspread in shadow and dotted by the glow of cottage and farm windows ; "not for the first time, and probably not for the last either. But he has never darkened any door of mine. I think he should come to me."

"When he's forbidden?" she asked. "Uncle Dan, he has been here, for all that."

"When?" he cried, stopping with flaming eyes.

"Last autumn, when hands were short for the gardens. He came and asked Anderson for a job. I had him put on to the little terrace garden. Nobody recognized him."

"The deuce you did," Sir Daniel mused, "and he worked for hire in his mother's garden—unrecognized?"

"And how many other such stolen visits did he make?" Neville asked, receiving no answer beyond a look of disapproval from his sister.

"I always said he'd sicken of the slums," Sir Daniel continued; "I gave him a year at first. I didn't calculate on an obstinacy so prolonged as this. It has been, as I predicted, an education for him. Lots of sense in 'From the Depths'—here and there, that is. And I note a gradual change in the Reflector articles."

"And I note that you are being caught by his fallacies and inclining to his fads," Neville said, with bitter memories of certain abuses in Stevenson's, long ago attacked by Adrian, and now at last abolished by his father.

"Old birds are not so easily caught by chaff, Neville. No, no. Mind you, I don't say the boy is right—very far from it. But now and then he falls into the right track, and here and there he stumbles on a fresh notion and opens up a new and luminous current of thought. Lord! to see him—as spick and span as ever—his clothes looking as if they grew on him—who'd think he'd been masquerading in the gutter all these years? But he should own up, he should come to me and say what a fool's part he's been playing, he should."

"And he will," Neville reflected very bitterly.

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"Did you see that last thing in the Reflector, Neville?" Sir Daniel asked. "Good, wasn't it?"

"Clever enough, but most awful rot—subversive of everything. A fine thing this gift of the gab—to make the worse appear the better reason."

"Worse or better, the thing is making a stir. That paper on 'Unto this Last' is really very remarkable; it clears away the cobweb fallacies and subtleties of Ruskin, putting his meaning in a fresh light. Everybody is talking, or writing, about it and wondering who the man with the initials is. Airedale got the credit at one time."

"Isn't it an open secret that it's a society, and not a man at all? A dozen or more wrote those papers—they all sign N. S. V. N. P. if they sign at all; it's the club motto."

"And all in exactly the same style, with the same turns of phrase and little mannerisms? Not a bit of it, Neville. We shall see—what we shall see. With all his fantastic notions and wrong-headedness and fallacies, Adrian is not a man to be hidden for long. He'll make his mark in the world somehow—that fellow. A genius always begins wildly and settles gradually on his lees. We shall see," he repeated, with forced cheerfulness. "But will he ever come back to me?" was the unspoken sigh of the old man's heart. "Shall we ever be at one again? Not unless he renounces every principle on which his conduct has ever been based."

Some turns he made in silence, his hands clasped behind him, dewy scents of rose and myrtle and carnation and the heavy fragrance of lime blossom all around, while a pink moon wandered with lessening rondure and paling ray into a sky of rose and shot a silver dream-radiance across the shadowy world, bringing tower and tree and village roof into view, and lying in sheets of pale lustre upon field and copse and wooded slope.

The beauty of the rich demesne steeped in pale poetic light thrilled him no more as in former years. All those

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broad acres were worthless now they could never bring his only son back to him. Adrian had given up all that rich heritage of rolling upland, farm-laden level, and wooded steep, with all the dignity, enjoyment, and power it involved—and what for?—an idea—a dream—a prejudice. And not only those broad lands, but all that colossal fortune, built up with bitter toil and strenuous, daring enterprise and many a subtle shift and dark and tortuous proceeding. Did he renounce that for a dream? a chimera? a fallacy? for the painful excitements and squalid privations of that East-End workman's life his father knew so well? for its bitter, brutal freedom and sordid companionships, its hunger and thirst and weariness? Hardly. Even this recent return to broadcloth and brainwork argued no longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt—witness those Reflector articles and that new and bold little paper, the Anti-Plutocrat, with its Utopian sketches and daring hypotheses. No, the young man had not made that sweeping renunciation for any light or transient reason; something strong and deep as life itself must have moved him, something that no chance could shake or time change. The moonrays strengthened and drew into clearer relief all the features of the broad, rich lands spread below; and the palpable, tangible reality of the birthright, so unhesitatingly flung to the winds, was vividly impressed upon him, forcing him to recognize the finality and strength of the principles that moved his son.

And the more Sir Daniel realized the greatness of the renunciation, the more he felt the meanness and vanity of the things renounced and the phantasmal nothingness of the long result of his strenuous, successful life. He had spent his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfies not. He turned with misty eyes to look at his great stone idol, shining clear in the moonlight, firm-based, solid, and sharp-cut, and knew that it was nothing. "Dreams—toys—baubles," he muttered sadly to himself.

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But he was too old to change.

A childish laugh rang out, a sylph-like figure darted from the shadows and clung to his arm, with some innocent prattle that irritated him, coming from the lips of a nearly grown woman.

"Hush, Murie; don't be silly, dear," Phyllis whispered, and Muriel, tossing her head sulkily, threw up the wing of hair waved across her forehead, so that the old scar showed distinct in the white light.

"Don't check the poor thing. She can't help it," he said. "Run and play with the dog, Murie. There, there. Pity she's so pretty," he added, "it draws—attention."

He knew that he was guilty of poor Phyllis's marriage to wealth and position, and was sorry.

"D'ye think Adrian is happy?" he suddenly asked; but she could not say.

Perhaps Adrian would have been at a loss to answer that question. He had little time and even less inclination to think of it. Perhaps those who have time to consider the question are never happy, except in the vanished past or unattained future; perhaps there is no happiness worth having without pain. The greatest happiness may be the power of longing for it. Let us give thanks for our dreams, the golden, impossible dreams of youth. Nature teaches, in the flight of birds and the music of winds and waters, that activity is the only enjoyment and motion the only perfect repose.

Time flew for Adrian, his thoughts ripened, his hopes widened; personal things dwindled more and more. The day came when he laid the finished scheme of the new Utopia before the sympathetic eyes of Blanche, who was responsible for so many useful details and pregnant suggestions, that it was as much hers as his.

Isobel had followed these trains of reasoning and debate, as they appeared in the Reflector and elsewhere, with sympathetic interest; she had discussed them with

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many minds influential in the world of politics, letters, and abstract thought; she had even vouchsafed a qualified approval of them to Bassett himself.

"It would do beautifully in dreamland," she granted, on one of the occasions on which they met amid crowds; "and you are a citizen of that shadow-realm and live—you and Airedale and the rest—in the clouds, lovely gold- and crimson-tinted sunset clouds, delightful to see, but damp and cold and uncomfortable to rest upon."

After Isobel's equivocal illness, her quick recovery from which seemed nothing less than magical, Blanche had taken her into the country, first to Chillingly Place, the scene of the honeymooning Whitsun recess. The infant heir, with his train, was of the party, but not Lord Aynsworth, not even for week-ends or solitary days of motoring or express training. Isobel vowed she would never live with him again—never, never. The life at Chillingly was simple; a rest-cure had been prescribed. There was no visiting, but much reading and talking, under broad and leafy oaks and blossoming limes, much open-air riding, cycling, driving, and many incursions to the nursery, always a magnet to Blanche. The result of these incursions was the gradual and surprising discovery by Isobel that the baby featured the Mostyns and was on the whole a child of promise, also an amusing toy. Hardly had she arrived at this conclusion, when the youthful heir, with a discretion beyond his months, contrived to be taken ill of bronchitis, when his little soul nearly slipped from its earthly sheath, which for some days was in imminent peril. These days of suspense past and the danger over, the child became the most precious possession and dearest interest in life; despair vanished; the world once more became habitable; once more Isobel found aims, plans, and duties. The child was nearly always with her, the pressure of the warm, soft body calmed her, its beauty and perfection evoked unceasing wonder and joy, its little murmurs and contented gurglings, its fits of

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helpless fury and revolt, the unconscious, pleasurable movements of the little limbs and features—all delighted Isobel and touched the deep, late-wakening mother-instinct, and charmed away the terrible, tortured craving that is the Nemesis of indulgence in opiates.

Later on the baby was taken to Ireland, where it became a centre of worship at Kilmeny Castle and in many a cabin and farmhouse round; after a few weeks it was conveyed to Belminster, and duly appreciated by its great-uncle, the archdeacon, by whose discreet intervention a treaty of peace was effected between the husband and wife. Not long after this their former relations were resumed on a footing of polite indifference and mutual toleration, and Blanche returned with cheerful satisfaction to her slums.

"After all," Isobel told her, "why insist upon a husband being a man and a fellow creature? Much simpler and more convenient to regard him as an institution, impersonal and irresponsible. One never quarrels with an institution. Neither the House of Lords nor the Habeas Corpus Act, nor the rules of procedure in the House of Commons, can hurt the feelings or exasperate the temper. There they are and they have to be reckoned with, that's all. Who looks for sympathy and affection from the Board of Trade, or the system of trial by jury?"

"Does any one but a fool look for sympathy and comprehension from any one?" Blanche afterwards asked, with uncharacteristic bitterness, of Airedale, who said he thought her holiday had been rather too strenuous and recommended a little genial dissipation in a mild climate during the winter.

The Brotherhood grew and grew, silently and slowly, putting forth branches here and there and even bringing their commercial principles into practical activity. A Guild of Christian Commerce was formed and subdivided into special guilds of arts, crafts, and trades, as—a guild of bakers, of clothiers, of builders, of cultivators, each

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being a religious association and bound by the principles of the Brotherhood. In consequence of belonging to the Guild, one or two well-known firms had to go into liquidation. Afterwards they started afresh in a humbler way, weighted with secret obligations, laid upon them, not by law, but by guild principles. Yet in the course of a few years many discharged those obligations and made modest but steady profits. It was also noticed that here and there a new style of shop was springing up, side by side with the great company stores, a style with many old-world features, retrograde, not at all up to date. These shops attracted a certain class of customers by the intrinsic worth and reliability of their wares and the absence of fuss and hurry and importunity to buy on the part of the vendors; they offered no "alarming sacrifices" or "sensational reductions," but priced their goods steadily above rather than below those of their rivals and always at even money; the Brotherhood held in especial abhorrence the long-outworn futility of elevenpence three farthings. To undersell was a capital crime; to advertise, except by simple announcement for sale on the premises (no higher than the first story) and in newspapers, modestly and without exaggerated type, was an unpardonable sin.

"But how are fortunes to be made, who is to be rich, if these principles and practices prevail?" Sir Daniel asked Lord Airedale, who was explaining these things one day at his request.

"The aim of Christian commerce was not to make fortunes," he heard, "but to supply the community with the necessities and adornments of life, in the course of which, by honourable and unselfish methods, and with time and patience, ample wealth might be gathered. Consider the wasted wealth that would be set free by the abolition of advertising alone. That is the Brotherhood's view."

"Oh, Lord, that Brotherhood!" cried the man of mil-

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lions. "No wonder that poor boy of mine is off his head."

The "poor boy" had not been slow to avail himself of the hint given to Phyllis at Bassett and duly conveyed to him, whereupon he had immediately asked to be permitted to pay his respects at Carlton House Terrace, and be admitted at least to be on speaking terms with his father.

Sir Daniel wrote that it was not possible to be on any terms with a son whose openly declared principles were an accusation and indictment of the whole of his father's life. The son replied that there was and could be no accusation, that they were both men and equally unable to alter their convictions at the bidding of the other, and that it was possible to differ on vitally important subjects without doing violence to friendship or family affection.

"Let me come," the letter ended.

"Apologize first," wrote the obdurate parent.

"I apologize," replied the son, "I didn't do it; but I won't do it again."

That evening after dinner a servant at Carlton House Terrace announced with an impassive face and unexpressive voice, "Mr. Bassett."

"Mr. Bassett is present," said Sir Daniel, impressively indicating Neville, whose complexion turned pale green shot with yellow.

"Mr. Adrian Bassett," the man amended, and Adrian walked in, his head high, his gaze level.

Sir Daniel appeared to be absorbed in a large newspaper that screened him from sight where he sat, in a deep chair, with a shaded lamp at his side. He shifted the paper a little to look round the corner at the prodigal's entrance.

"Ah! How d'ye do?" he said, with just that tinge of surprise appropriate to the visit of an intimate but not over-welcome acquaintance, and the offer of two fingers. "So you've turned up again, eh?"

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"Yes, dad, I've turned up again. How are you?"

Sir Dan retired with a grunt to the shelter of his absorbing paper; Muriel clung to Adrian, caressing and jubilant; Phyllis gave him a warm kiss and a glad welcome; Neville turned many shades greener and snarled a conventional "How d'you do? What?" he added, in the agreeable manner peculiar to himself, "tired of husks? Hankering after flesh-pots, eh?"

"I don't know about husks," he returned; "but chaff can be tiresome enough. Do I look as if I'd fed on manna all this time, Phyllis?"

"You look what you are and always were, a perfect dear," she said warmly, drawing his head down and giving him, to her brother's unspeakable disgust, a hearty kiss on each cheek.

"More like a perfect young donkey," came snarling from behind the Times.

"Then what must *you* be, Uncle Dan?" Muriel's soft treble asked.

"Great-uncle to a cheeky young kid," she heard.

"A goat too?" she sighed.

Then Sir Daniel dropped his paper, and said that as the night was fine and there was no hurry, he thought he would walk down to the House, and Adrian observed that as he was walking that way, he would accompany him, and followed him downstairs. A servant came with Sir Daniel's paletot; Adrian silently invested his father with it and handed him his hat, which Sir Daniel at last silently took, then went absently down the steps, and walked composedly in the direction of the House without any recognition of his son's presence. Adrian commended the beauty of the evening. Then he wondered if a Bill now before the House would pass the Lords, and opined that a ministerial crisis was more imminent than was commonly supposed.

Sir Daniel's countenance remained sphinx-like in its inscrutability until they came to Parliament Square,

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when a daring assertion that last night's closure had been improperly applied drew an emphatic denial from him, followed by sharp argument, in the midst of which Adrian suddenly wished him good night.

"What a noble talk we've had," he said. "I don't know when I've enjoyed a talk so much," upon which, the old man burst into a genial roar of laughter.

CHAPTER X

THE BROTHERHOOD'S FAREWELL

THE Master of the College walked in the garden sacred to Fellows, speaking of the imminent departure of one of them with sadness akin to reproach. Beyond the mossed grey walls and tree-shadowed walks, magic of moonlight lay upon fragrant meadows, where the river ran unseen; it flooded these rose-scented gardens, behind which rose the beautiful city, with all her towers and domes and pinnacled walls and labyrinthine lanes dark with overhanging boughs and bright with wallflowers, like a page from a poem of mediæval beauty and mystery, or a leaf from old romance, or, what she really is, a long stone chronicle of England's inner life.

Murmurs of chiming bells held the tremulous air in suspense and died away under the mighty, commanding boom of the bell in the great gateway tower, whose deep reverberations summoned bygone generations of students from meadow and river, tavern and winding lane, home each to his proper college. The deep notes hummed in widening circles over the many-towered city, over field and farm and echoing hill, and left the air quivering from the last sounding stroke in a stillness broken by a burst of boyish laughter from open windows, before the Master spoke again.

"That the movement originated here," he said, pausing before the spiced sweetness of a mass of pinks, "was surely fit. Another of our impossible loyalties. Vaguely I recall some of the names you mention; I was then

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Fellow of New. I was surely tutor to none of that set. Well, we shall miss you here. You, who are capable of so much, who might have given yourself wholly to scholarship and research, as so few can in these sordid, utilitarian days."

"Our battle," he who was addressed rejoined, "is with that same sordid and utilitarian spirit. It is, as you say, an impossible loyalty—like his of Assisi—and his who died, forsaken and betrayed, in these latter days at Khartoum."

Slightly, perhaps unconsciously, unnoticed in the silvery shadows, the Master raised his hat. "Not in vain," he murmured, "not in vain at least was Gordon's life. But this Utopian dream of Bassett's," he added aloud, "can never be realized. The Brotherhood are following wandering fires, tilting at Quixotic windmills. What came of Pietro Bernardone's dream? How long were his Franciscans faithful to that pale and bloodless bride of his?"

"Everything came of it," the other stoutly returned; "it breathed a new and vitalizing spirit into the languishing pulse of Christendom. It was the dawn of tenderness and the gentler religious emotions, and of that joyous kinship with nature and that worship of God in the visible work of his hands, that most strongly marks the modern European mind from the ancient. It was the first note of the still incomplete Renaissance. The impossibility of that dream alone stamps it as eternal. What if the frocked order degenerated? The spirit of the dream of St. Francis is living still; it can never die."

"Bassett, if I remember rightly," the Master reflected, "made no great mark here. In the House of Commons I gather that he is reckoned an average working member—too much given to fads—and a rather distinguished speaker, more brilliant than that steady old parliamentary hand, Sir Daniel. He nearly pushed that Prevention of

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Commercial Corruption Bill through, and actually managed to get some minor measures on kindred subjects passed. But he holds it impossible to excise social cankers by Act of Parliament."

"Politics are not his line," the other returned; "he speaks and writes well on social and economic questions. He is a minor poet of some repute. I have heard you quote from 'In a College Garden'; many rank it just after Arnold's *Thyrsis* and his *Scholar-Gypsy*. But it is by his papers in the *Reflector* and the *Anti-Plutocrat*, and such works as 'From the Depths,' that he is best known. Bassett is our leading spirit, the pivot on which the whole movement turns—allowing for the influence of the Settlement upon him primarily and the rest of us secondarily, and for very strong support from Grimsby with illuminating flashes from Marshland's bright intellect. Airedale is our great steadying force and safety valve; D'Arcy is our humorist—the Brother Juniper of the Order."

"I thought some woman-writer——"

"You are thinking of Miss Ingram—she is a settlement worker from Oriel Hall. She was here, too, and greatly distinguished herself—came out first in Greats."

"H'm! And all of you, women and all—or at least a large detachment of you—are going to the ends of the earth to found a colony, and practise commerce on Christian principles, and show the beauty of plain living and high thinking—to Hottentots and Forest Pygmies, eh? You will be a subtle blend of colony, convent, and Utopia, with a dash of phalanstery and a spice of chartered company."

"We *are* a chartered company to the government—to the Brotherhood, a sovereign state. Only those who carry out Golden Rule principles in their lives can settle in our territory, the whole of the land being owned by the Brotherhood and held on certain conditions—a dash of feudalism there. We may acquire property—we may

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admit rich settlers to our colony—but no brother may possess more than a certain maximum of wealth for himself alone. All wealth above that mark becomes the property of the Brotherhood—or rather that portion of the Brotherhood in the colony—unless the owner publicly devotes it to some approved purpose, not benefiting himself. Our fundamental principle, remember, is that love of gain and selfish commerce have come to such a head as to corrupt the whole social organism and threaten our present civilization with extinction. Bassett pointed out in that last work of his that the complexity and vast scale on which modern trade is carried on, involving many middlemen and avoiding personal responsibility as it does, is largely responsible for commercial dishonesty—making bribes and tricks and secret dealing easy, and destroying personal relations, not only between buyer and seller, but also between employer and employed. So there are to be no trading companies in Brothersland either for mercantile or manufacturing purposes. You must know where a thing comes from, or who made or grew it, or imported it, before you may buy it in Brothersland. Every tradesman, craftsman, and cultivator has his guild, to which he is responsible. In many cases the guild plays the part of capitalist company, the Guild of Agriculture supplies machinery for irrigating and draining, and grants loans to buy seed and stock. And each guild keeps a registry and informs itself of the demand and supply of craftsmen or merchandise in all parts of the colony. There might be no work for builders in the north while there was dearth of workmen to build in the south. The guild knows this and duly circulates the labour.”

“And what if the labourer be idle or incompetent ? ”

“The guild expels him unless he mends. And in Brothersland he is expelled the colony. The guilds are religious fraternities and exact obedience.”

“What dreamers you are. I seem dimly to have heard

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some of this a few years back at the Settlement ; there was a lecturer, a young man, able and eloquent, but unpractical. He had lived among working men as a working man."

"Probably Bassett himself. He gave up his share in old Bassett's companies and declined to be mixed up in any of his transactions ; he was turned out of doors, disinherited, and a nephew put in his place. He is now about thirty or thirty-three, a tall, knightly looking man of fine presence, with that personal magnetism necessary to leaders of men and of movements. Wasn't it you who observed of Tennyson that he looked even in old age as if he had just stepped out of one of his own Idylls ? Bassett has that look, a sort of unconscious consciousness of being occupied with high thoughts. Very simple in his life, almost austere, with a great capacity for silence. An eye full of dream and yet penetrating."

"That must be the man."

In that very moonlight moment, but under the roof of a great hall in the hard glare of electric light, the man in question was explaining the aims and origin of the colony the Brotherhood were about to found in East Africa, at a farewell meeting of the Brotherhood.

"Civilization," he said, "was the brotherhood of man, a banding together of humanity for mutual service and protection, to make the fullest development of human faculties possible—in Arnold's words, 'to make reason and the will of God prevail.' To this end a certain measure of wealth was necessary, an excessive measure—as at present in England—fatal. Christianity, which was the death of individualism, alone had power to realize this ideal and only permanent civilization. The golden rule of Christianity in commerce, as in everything, was the only remedy for our present, decadent civilization, in which wealth had become an end, not a means, and in which all classes, and not only Arnold's classic 'barbarians,' were reverting to savagery, devoting them-

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selves wholly to bodily enjoyments, and cultivating only physical virtues. Art and literature, and especially fiction and drama, were being atrophied by a harsh materialism, devoid alike of poetry, imagination, and intellect; a fierce and ignorant and un-Christian democracy was sapping the foundations of authority and reverence. All men were not—as democracy asserted—born free and equal, but widely unequal and each man the servant of every other. Brothersland was to be colonized not by a chance medley of individual settlers but by a complete and fully organized body politic formed on a Utopian scheme, the result of many years of thought and discussion on the part of the Brotherhood; it was to be a practical exposition of the true principles of civilization, and to destroy the great evils arising from excessive wealth and abject poverty, chiefly by the application of the Golden Rule to every department of human intercourse, and partly by the organization of labour and trade and every species of human activity. Master and man were to be united by the recognition of common interests and mutual service, and the knowledge that capital and labour were not separate but united forces, impossible to divide by any sharp line."

The speaker paused and looked down, a tall and slender but strong figure, standing solitary in the vast hall, which was packed with crowds, hanging hushed and attentive upon his words. Then he looked up suddenly, every feature, every limb, changed in a moment to finest spirit, and with fluent fervour and balanced phrase portrayed the dazzling vision of this realized Utopia—the whole body politic in every member made free and pure and joyous and beautiful by the spirit of the Golden Rule, permeating and ennobling all human intercourse, and exalting and gladdening every human transaction.

"Including war, of course?" called a deep voice from the centre of the hall, at which the whole assembly turned

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as one man to recognize Sir Daniel Bassett's marked and massive personality.

"Including necessary war, of course," was echoed courteously in the golden tones of the speaker, who, as if answering a suggestion of his own mind rather than another's, still looked straight before him over the heads of the audience, with the deep rapt gaze that sees nothing visible to bodily eyes.

"What a wreck was there!" Sir Daniel mused, recalling the rich argosies of golden hope set sailing by the promise of his son's bright and cherished youth only to founder in a fog of dream. "That poor boy of mine" had come to be a settled and recognized misfortune, the edge of which had been blunted by long use. During these later years of peace between them, the father and son had discussed every possible variety of weather and family health; also foreign politics, the perennial upheaval of London thoroughfares, and the Boer War. After the black week in the terrible first year of the war, Sir Daniel had raised and financed a troop of yeomanry, in the ranks of which his son had served in South Africa, receiving more than one Boer bullet, and being finally invalided home. The war, and especially the black week, had more nearly united them than anything in all their lives; but they were, and always must be, apart, because, as Sir Dan sadly mused, of the kink in the brain which prevented "that poor boy of mine" from perceiving that business is business and never can be anything else.

So "he gave them their desire and sent leanness withal into their soul."

For because of that one little kink in the brilliant lad's brain, all the spirit and savour was taken from the self-raised man's realized dream of fabulous wealth and wide influence.

But his son, that other dreamer, the fiery chariot of whose enthusiasm had borne him so far from the vast throng whose pulses were still quick with the glow of it?

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He must, the duchess reflected, as she directed her opera glasses upon the slender, impressive figure, still vibrant with the passion of his great hope—a strange and graceful offset from the rocky strength of his sturdy sire—surely he must have reached a height of happiness rarely attained by mortals. The dream of his life, that to which every thought and hope of so many years had tended, had taken shape; it lived and breathed before him; he, with the comrades of his enthusiasm, was actually on the eve of leading a chosen band, an organized community, into the African wild, and there founding a nation that should be the germ of many nations, the hope and salvation of the civilized world.

And yet her searching glance detected a lurking sadness, a vague restless want, behind the inspired gaze and genial smile, that told the vanity of all human achievement.

It was long since she had seen him; five years of vice-regal life spent in Oriental magnificence among sumptuous pageants had left their mark on her. She too had drunk deep of the delight of dreams realized, and the vanity of things earthly. Who could tell how much she had refused—finally, irrevocably, beyond all possibility or hope of recall—on that summer afternoon at Ranelagh? Never again could the years roll back to that sudden parting of the ways in her life.

Before leaving the hall the duchess sent for Adrian, summoning him to the presence in a royal fashion that admitted of no refusal, and pausing in the entrance hall to receive him for so many allotted moments and no more, before going on to some brilliant function.

"Just to congratulate and wish you good luck," she said, with offered hand and radiant smile.

He gave her a long look, steady and searching, acknowledging the good wishes with a slight bow.

"I must thank you for a thrill, a real, authentic thrill," she added, vaguely disappointed. "Your picture of the

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colony's future was vivid and stirring to a degree. I was entirely with you the whole time, and shall be for at least half an hour longer, I suspect. So fascinating to think of a whole regularly organized band of men going out to the wildest and most horrid part of Africa on purpose to lose their fortunes instead of to make them. So original, so fresh ! ”

He reminded her of Airedale's successful Golden Rule experiment on his sea-board property. This, owing to the beauty and tranquillity ensured by strict conditions of building and planting, and the absence of all disfiguring advertisements and vulgar and stupid amusements, glaring monster hotels and catch-penny shops, had had the unexpected result of proving a financial success. A seaside resort of exceptional charm had gradually developed there, frequented by a superior class of visitors, not necessarily wealthy, since there were cottage lodgings and furnished cottages and residential cottages to be had, as well as comfortable and comely houses in large gardens and grounds, built or rented by their occupiers under stringent conditions ; and in a very short time there was such a rush for building plots that ground rents of fabulous sums might have been demanded and received, had Golden Rule principles permitted it.

So the duchess heard while she stood in the entrance hall, shimmering from throat to ankle in a rich brocade coat, with jewels in her hair and a half-amused, half-tolerant gleam in her eyes.

“All this is sport to you, Isobel,” he said in conclusion. “To me it is a second religion.”

His eyes repeated the smile on his lips when he spoke, and a hoarse call of “Duchess of Midshire's carriage ” opened a passage in the crowd, through which he piloted the superb figure to a surging sea of tossing manes and glittering vehicles in the lighted place outside. A last light inclination of the graceful head, a last sparkle of laughing eyes from within the carriage, as it rolled noise-

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lessly on its way, and he stood—unconscious of the whirl and hurry and glitter round him—stranded, motionless, bewildered, till a mournfully remonstrant policeman sent him in for his coat and hat.

Who was that regally beautiful woman? Why had she smiled so strangely and sadly at parting?

All these years had been restless with a vague and ever-baffled longing, an incessant hunger for a voice, a glance, the clasp of the hand which had lain lingering with warm pressure in his but a moment since.

In all these years this meeting had been anticipated with desire that was agony and hope that was half dread. Yet his pulse kept its temperate rhythm, and the longing and the fear were alike unstilled. Her name, the beloved name, that was a sacred symphony in itself, that was never heard or read without a thrill, or spoken without a vision of that wild northern sea, salt-breathing, rolling up the sand-blown links in the sunset, with subdued roar of many-voiced thunders, ridge after ridge, foam-crest toppling upon foam-crest, innumerable, "terrible as an army with banners"—had slipped involuntarily, unregarded, by mere force of habit, from his lips. And this woman of ripe and regal beauty and commanding presence, this duchess every inch of her, what charm, what magnetism was diffused about her, what music was in her voice, and what magic in that enigmatic, wistful look of hers!

But Isobel—the gay, graceful, and simple girl he had loved with that first fervour of youth—where was she? And where were the roses of that enchanted summer, where the moonbeams that wove such glamour about college towers and gardens one week in a long-gone June? There was no Isobel any more; she had faded into nothing. He had loved the shadow of a name.

After the first great shock the ground soon became firm again—horizons widened, there was ampler breathing space, and a sense of being unfettered and at large

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and strong. It was one of those rare nights of crystalline clearness after storms of rain and wind that sometimes overvault the gloom and grime of the million-peopled city. The moon was set; the heavens opened and spread themselves, higher and higher, deep upon deep, vast, immeasurable, pouring forth treasure of innumerable stars, constellation upon constellation, flock upon flock, star beyond utmost star in inexhaustible, inconceivable profusion, till the arched and infinite space seemed almost as thickly powdered with suns as the great glittering span of the Galaxy itself.

Beautiful, beautiful world, in which it was joy to be alive, and bliss to walk beneath that starry splendour of unimaginable immensity, shining in such serenity and majesty above the fever and fret of this stony desert of glaring streets, this seething, ineffectual pettiness of human strife, that was yet so fascinating and absorbing in interest. The stars were telling their tale, the old beautiful tale the Hebrew poet heard. All must be well, in spite of the madness and misery that surged incessantly beneath the grimy roofs and gilded palaces they shone upon in the violated stillness of the city's unrestful night. Peace and healing were at hand—not for a chosen few only, but for all, perhaps even for those poor night wanderers who made the long street, so rich in costly merchandise, a horror of open shame.

Walking eastward beneath the starry sky, across which the broad galaxy woven of innumerable suns was flung like a light scarf of silvery gauze, his heart expanded more and more with the thought that all this wretchedness and manifold cruelty of overcrowded cities would disappear with the dawn of a truer civilization and the rise of a nobler commerce. He saw the strongholds of civic cruelty go down and the desolations of many generations vanish before the standard of the nobler way that the Brotherhood were to set up in the wilderness; he saw the Cross blazoned upon argosy and mart, upon factory

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and field, wharf and dock, above mine and chimney shaft, everywhere, and not only upon church and college and antique hall; and he blessed God in his heart that he had been born and trained by pain of grief and denial, and permitted to be, if only as doorkeeper or servitor, among the least of those who fought and wrought for the fulfilment of that mighty hope.

The starry pageant moved imperceptibly above and the human millions slept and sinned and suffered below, while he walked, as he loved to do, the labyrinthine streets of the great city, sometimes accosting, sometimes accosted by, a wanderer, who would be homeless at times, hopeless often, a stranger or a friend, but almost always in these regions, poor to hunger point—till the house that he shared with D'Arcy and his family in a narrow street near the settlement was reached, the key turned noiselessly in the lock, the narrow stair scaled, and two small, simply furnished rooms, all that represented the Englishman's castle to the millionaire's son, taken possession of.

The duchess in the meantime flashed from reception to ball and from ball to ball again, a shining portent, now all diamond and epigram, now all flutter and frivolity, and always with the refrain of a song in her mind—

O the bonnie Links, where Eden waters stray,
And the clean-hit ball flies true, and hearts are gay,
And the golfer, having made his ten-mile round,
Takes his ease upon the Ladies' putting-ground—
My heart aches for the roar
Of their billow-trampled shore!—

and its unforgotten echo, long ago begun—

Bonnie Links, you fill my dreams by night and day
With the charm no time nor grief can take away,
Of those sunny hours that sped on wings of gold,
And those grey, sweet hours in mist and storm-wind rolled
By the headlong revelry
Of the leaping, shouting sea—

CHAPTER XI

THE VOYAGE OF THE GOLDEN HOPE

SOMETHING of the vivid enthusiasm of that starlight walk through London streets was conveyed next day to the sympathetic ear of a lady pacing the shadowy cloister of Oriel Hall, in the brief leisure of her well-filled day. Little trace of years was upon this lady's face; it kept the old pearly clearness and large-eyed candour and directness of look, with finer cut of feature and greater depth of thought and reserve of feeling. The ideals, hopes, and aims of early youth still inspired maturer years with an even deeper and stronger enthusiasm; accepted sorrow and voluntary renunciation had strengthened character and sweetened a nature too sure of aim, too steadfast of will, not to be in peril of hardness, and too passionate not to be in danger of revolt. Many a woman, driven desperate by extreme toil and penury and desolation, had been held from the brink of that destruction, from the depth of which few women emerge, by the sweetness and strength they found in the eyes and lips of this friend and counsellor, and the magnetic touch of the white hand that sought to draw them back and kindle fresh hope in their sorrowing, fainting hearts. Some fierce souls she had tamed, some vicious and degraded creatures reclaimed, and many a friend of either sex, otherwise lonely, rested upon her regard.

"Life grows more and more interesting with years," she told Isobel. "I have so many friends. Happy?"

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What is happiness, Isobel, after all? Can there be any happiness without some blend of pain? Can we be warmed and fed except after cold and hunger?"

"Happiness," sighed the duchess, with a wistful, far-away gaze, "is what we want. And we never have what we want and we never want what we have."

"How can we, Belle? It would be a contradiction of terms."

Isobel was holding her cousin's hands in a firm passionate grip, the keen sparkle of her blue gaze searching the dark, still depth of Blanche's.

"But we can, and you know it. Ah! you think I don't know," she said, pushing her away with a little mocking laugh. "You have never had what you wanted; yet, wonderful to say, you have often wanted what you had."

"Your grace is pleased to be enigmatical," returned Blanche, with a tranquil smile. "And just a thought impertinent," she added, with a little farewell nod at the door.

Isobel's wistful, tender glance followed her; and after a long and silent fit of musing the duchess snatched a pen from a writing-table and wrote, with many erasures and fresh beginnings, this and nothing more:—

"Both women fell in love with the sleeping youth under the tree. Of course he chose the wrong one and spoilt the other's life."

"The Duchess of Midshire was at Queen's Hall last night," Adrian suddenly interpolated in his confidences at Oriel Hall, as if the inspiration of that gloriously starred sky in some way depended upon the fact of the lady's presence.

"Ah! the poor duchess? yes."

"Poor? yes, that is the right word. And yet she has her heart's desire. But where is the Isobel we knew?"

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"My Isobel is there still—buried under the ermine and strawberry leaves—but there." She had paused to pick a dead leaf from the dusty, starved creeper climbing a cloister pillar, and looked up with a smile that stirred something deep down in his heart. Why had he never before observed the singularly refined type of beauty in this thoughtful face, the calm and strong sweetness of a mouth more vividly crimson by contrast with the clear and healthy pallor of the face and darkness of the eyes, the still surface of which covered some profoundly sad mystery of pain, probably impersonal, perhaps that deep sense of the sorrow of the world's sorrow, the sharing of which had been such a bond between them?

Blanche was beautifully made, tall and supple, and of a winning, gracious presence. She should have rewarded Airedale's long constancy, Adrian told her. Then he heard that Airedale was quite happy enough with one of Lulworth's handsome sisters, whose dowerless condition was of less consequence to his family and of none at all to one of the Golden Brotherhood, since Lady Somersby, after a terribly close shave of absolute ruin averted by a sudden and startling turn of luck, had solemnly forsworn cards and every species of gambling, to the great detriment of the poor lady's interest in life and total loss of her occupation. Airedale's place in the Brotherhood, and George Lulworth's, and the part each was to fill in the colony of noble commerce, now came up for discussion, and was followed by the more permanent part to be played in it by Lulworth's brothers, by Grimsby—the Justinian of their Utopia—by D'Arcy, Coster Dick—who was responsible for a contingent from South and East London, including half a dozen of the cleverest members of the burgling profession (now warranted to burgle no more) outside His Majesty's asylum for those 'gentry—Marshland, Wullie Grierson, with a long retinue of canny brither Scots, and others. And last, but not least, they

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spoke of the newly instituted bishop, whose yet unpeopled see included, and was named from, Brothersland.

"How interesting it will be," Blanche said, "to watch the beginnings of the great community and note their development in face of the derision of British mankind. That cathedral, for instance, the bishop and clergy are to raise on landing, first a tent, then a thatched or wattled shed, and then gradually, by voluntary labour and gifts, a dream of religious beauty in stone——"

"Evidently you mean to live to a good old age," Adrian put in.

"How puzzled the journalists and travellers will be! What scorn and misunderstandings and misinterpretations! You will hear it all from us; I shall send you cuttings and report discussions and casual gossip."

"Send?" cried Adrian. "From whence?"

"From Oriel Hall chiefly, and sometimes from Belminster and from Ashwell Rectory, wherever——"

"But you will be with us. What do you mean? What are you thinking of?"

"Not with you," she said. "I have looked at it from every point of view, and come to the conclusion that my place is here—within reach of my people—my father is ageing now. But a good portion of my heart will always be in Brothersland." She might have added and all her worldly possessions, which had gone towards the purchase of the land in that colony. "The Brotherhood, or at least its aims, I can best serve, if at all, here."

"Blanche! you are joking."

"Not joking. In serious, solemn, deadly earnest."

"But how are we to go without you?" he asked helplessly; "the whole Brotherhood depends on you. You have been the soul and the inspiration of everything."

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They had stopped in an opening of the cloisters, she leaning on the breast-high parapet, beneath the pointed and traceried arch, and still occupied with the starved creeper's gallant struggle for life; he, standing by the pillar, a shoulder stayed against it; so that, while every shade of expression in her face was visible to him, she was unaware of the change that had come upon his.

For to him nothing seemed to be any good any more. The great dream of a perfect civilization, in which reason and the will of God, spiritual and intellectual aims, were to take the place of money-making and body-worship; the mighty hope of founding an ideal community that should make the pursuit of these high aims possible and so regenerate the world and bring happiness to all mankind, suddenly became faint, far off, receding into dim regions of impossibility—a brilliant, rainbow-coloured bubble, bursting into colourless vapour: “How *can* I go without you?” he asked, in a voice so overcharged with feeling that she looked up, conscious of the unconscious change of pronoun, to be startled by the consternation and despair of the gaze that met hers.

“My dear Adrian,” she replied at last, after a great effort at calm and common sense, “you exaggerate my part in these things. What you say of me applies only to you, who are the recognized originator of—of Brothersland——”

“And if I were,” he broke in; “at whose initiation? Who was my Egeria, my friend, my counsellor in doubt, my director in perplexity, my comfort in despair, my—Blanche—Blanche, don't desert me now—at this parting of the ways—in my hour of need. Blanche, how can I go, how can I live, without you?”

“Quite well,” she replied, trembling too much and too much agitated to notice similar signs of emotion in him. “I am not,” she added, “the only friend you are leaving, and of course—I shall be sorry—it will be a blow—I

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should be sorry if we could part—quite—but of course we shall write——”

“But why should we part at all?”

“My mother—the others are all married and gone away——” It was too much, the proud and calm and self-possessed Blanche broke down, trying hard to draw her hands from the firm clasp that held them with a grip of iron.

“Marry me, dear,” he urged, with an increasingly terrific pressure of her hands. “Marry me. I love you with all my heart; I must have loved you for years; but there was never any time to think about it.”

“Plenty of time to think of Isobel,” she reflected, sick with the pain of her hands.

“My life has no meaning without you; it never had—even when—but that is over. I will try to make you happy. We have been friends so long, Blanche; our aims and hopes are and have been always the same. Might you not come to love me in time—at least enough to be happy with me?”

“Oh! you are breaking my hands—look!”—— They were purple, numbed, and crushed together—— “And the old people at Belminster——”

“The archdeacon is a brother—and the other children are within reach—and I love you and need you—and the Cause needs you—— Oh! I have hurt you. Don’t cry, for Heaven’s sake, don’t cry. Blanche, Blanche.”

A mothers’ meeting was in full swing on the other side of the quadrangle, sparrows chirped in the sapling avenue opposite, the usual rattling and creaking and crashing and shrieking of iron dragged from the warehouses, and the usual harsh sounds from the streets, clashed and jarred in a sort of demon symphony—else there was stillness and a solitude only broken by people crossing the court from time to time, or the sound of a voice, or a laugh from an open window. And in the

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shadowy cloister was comparative, and by a right use of pillars, absolute, seclusion at this scorching hour of the day, so that the sound of a man's step crossing the courtyard was unnoticed from the cloister, and the sight of a lady in it with a handkerchief to her face invisible from the quadrangle. And when Archdeacon Ingram walked into the cloister and came face to face with a wet-eyed daughter in earnest conference with an agitated man, there was surprise on both sides.

"I was telling him I had decided not to go to Brothersland," Blanche explained presently.

"I was asking her to be my wife," Adrian said.

"And a very sensible thing to do," the archdeacon replied; "I cannot imagine a more suitable match. And as both belong to the inner brotherhood of perpetual poverty, want of worldly wealth can have no weight in the matter. Come, Blanche, my dear, give me a kiss and put that handkerchief away, and we'll talk it over another time in a more secluded place."

"Unfortunately she won't hear of it, Archdeacon. She can't leave you and her mother."

"But for *this* cause, my dear," said the archdeacon, laying a gentle hand upon her shoulder, "a man *shall* leave his father and his mother. Let us go in and have some tea and adjourn the discussion, eh? If this is the first time of asking, Adrian, you need not despair. Faint heart, remember. By the way, I've been lunching at Midshire House, and Belle gave me a note for you, as she knew I was going to look you up in the course of the day. Perhaps because she was glad to save postage, perhaps because personal delivery is more impressive and picturesque; these dear women are like that. I conjecture that the communication is important, a cheque—in four figures—for the Brothersland experiment, say."

By this time the note had issued from some remote depths of the archidiaconal waistcoat, and was handed

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with a benign smile and look of genial interest to the fortunate recipient, whose perusal of it was brief and productive of profound astonishment merging gradually in pleasure.

"Both women?" he murmured; "the sleeping youth under the tree?" What on earth is she driving at? Oh! Oh! Yes, Archdeacon, the communication is of importance, of deepest, most vital, importance to me. Only it can't possibly be true. Blanche, Blanche, what does it mean? what can it mean?" he added, handing it to her, and keeping her back with both hands, while the archdeacon discreetly went in to pay his respects to the head of Oriel Hall.

"Oh!" she said, the crimson rushing over face, neck, and ears, "nothing, nothing at all—only that three people made fools of themselves years and years ago and had better forget all about it."

"One lovely day in June, when the poet's dream came true? Is it possible? Blanche, dear, dear Blanche; let the years roll back, let us be young again, let us be fools again with the wise, sweet folly of youth. Let us, let me, choose again, and let it be right this time. Oh! don't say it is too late. Let it be right at last; let it be right!"

The archdeacon had enjoyed three full cups of most delicious, fresh-made tea and heard and imparted much useful and interesting information on settlement and other topics, before his daughter entered the drawing-room with a more than usually calm and stately demeanour and a look upon her face, when she observed that Mr. Bassett had hurried away to keep an appointment, which led him to the conclusion that the interview had terminated in an entirely satisfactory manner, a conclusion justified by subsequent events.

For a few weeks later Oriel Hall was the scene of a simple and inexpensive, but gay and happy, wedding. The bride—no overweighted stack of expensive millinery

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—wore a white transparent gown, well-fitting and made for love by some dressmaking friends, and a wreath composed of real myrtle from Lady Bassett's own garden at Bassett Towers and real orange-blossom from the Midshire conservatories. The wedding party walked to the parish church, which was crowded with uninvited friends—who were evidently not under the prevalent impression that a wedding turns the House of Prayer into a noisy reception-room—and decked with flowers—none bought, but all given—some from slum window-gardens, some from extensive country gardens and glass houses. The reception that followed at Oriel Hall was numerous and not at all select, though it included several people of rank and fortune, and many of eminence in literature, art, and politics. The ever-faithful George Lulworth supported his friend at this trying juncture of his existence, and poor little Muriel Thornton officiated joyously as bridesmaid.

Sir Dan had invented some respectable excuse for absenting himself at the last moment from a ceremony which seemed to put the coping-stone to the colossal folly of "that poor boy of mine." He made no wedding present for good reasons. "If I gave you land you would sell it, and if I gave you money it would go to this crack-brained expedition of yours," he explained and his son admitted. But he made a fresh will and settled a considerable sum, well tied up, upon the pair for life, with reversion to their children. "So that Sir Adrian and Lady Bassett need not spend their old age in a work-house and the third baronet need not be a beggar after all. That is, providing the whole lot are not murdered by savages or killed by fever and famine at the start," he confided to the duchess.

Many changes had come to Daniel Bassett. Stevenson's had lost its senior partner; since when it had dwindled and gone into liquidation, only to rise again, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of its assets under a new and glitter-

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ing name, which added to the desolation of many a tattered hoarding, and increased the squalor of many a hideous suburb, and blotted the beauty of many a sweet and tranquil spot.

It was whispered that old Dan Bassett was growing poor; it was certain that he planned no fresh commercial schemes; it was conjectured that he was more scrupulous than he had been. It was known that relations between him and Neville had been strained—not ruptured; there was not the remotest chance that either Neville or his children would be cut off from the succession to the Bassett Towers property. That would have been contrary to Sir Dan's rough but definite code of honour. Jacob had indeed supplanted Esau; but the blessing, once given, could not be recalled. Besides, Esau had neither repented nor shown the least desire to win back the lost birthright.

One lovely afternoon in autumn the duchess walked on the cliffs overlooking the Channel with her six-year-old son, stopping often and looking out to sea. They were staying at a place on the coast west of Plymouth, one of the duke's numerous homes, from which the owner's second title of marquis was named.

"There she is, mother!" cried the actual bearer of the title.

"Nonsense, child, how can you see so far without glasses?" She sat on a thymy knoll, her bright hair buffeted by the salt sea breeze, and looked eagerly through her opera-glasses, screwing and unscrewing them nervously to get the right focus. "How do you know her?"

"I saw her at Plymouth. I remember her shape."

The vessel was indeed the Golden Hope, sole representative at present of the shipping that was to crowd the natural harbour, where the still unbuilt port and probable capital of Brothersland was to be—and actually was on a carefully detailed plan, as well as on the map

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of Brothersland itself. The spot on which the dedication service of the colony was to be held on landing under the open sky, and where subsequently the church tent and successive church buildings were to stand, was accurately measured and marked out on the plan of the city. The altar furniture, worked by women of the Brotherhood, and the ornaments and vessels, including the massive gold chalice and paten of exquisite design, modelled and wrought for love by brothers out of gold and jewels that had been worn as personal ornaments; all were ready in the fine vessel—simply furnished and no floating palace within—that bore the leaders of the colony and all its hopes. Round the stem of the chalice ran a ring of diamond and opal that the duchess had worn herself in token of betrothal to her first love and returned to him with the broken troth.

His wife had no such ring, only the necessary circlet of plain gold; but Isobel could never forget the faces of Blanche and Adrian in a fugitive glance surprised between them on their wedding day.

She watched the vessel steaming away over a halcyon sea dyed in splendour of sunset, watched till the boy was tired and left her and came back again, and was finally told to run home alone, and her eyes grew wet and blurred the tranquil glory of the vision. Away and away into the western splendour, like a dream of insubstantial, unutterable beauty, the transfigured vessel glided on a sea that scarcely heaved in the deep peace. It *was* a dream, she thought, freighted with a dream-cargo, wild and lovely and impossible to realize except in some dim region of faerie. Like a dream the burnished hull sank, the masts and funnel merged and mingled in the purple and gold of the glowing horizon, and glided unseen away and away, beyond the farthest ridge of the darkening sea, in the track of the sunken sun. And with it the last gleam of youth and romance faded out of her life, leaving it blankest, emptiest prose.

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The duchess's heart went with the vessel beyond the utmost sea-limit, and long after the enchanted vision had faded in the dusk she mused, wondering if those fairy dreams of an ideal state and sinless, unselfish commerce would vanish and fade like the vessel that carried them into the unknown. Or if, in all this airy tissue of dream and fantasy, there might be some seed of vital, eternal truth.

Faster and faster fell the unheeded tears. "*Chi fece per villate il gran rifiuto*" ran in her thoughts, and she realized that she, and not the man from whose brain and heart the glorious vision sprang, had made the Great Refusal on that summer afternoon in the enchanted Armida-gardens of Ranelagh. *Per villate*; yes, she owned it; *per villate* she had sold her birthright; the pottage had been too alluring to the passing need.

"That man," the duke said later by the evening fire, "showed considerable promise at one time. And then to turn out a mere dreamer, after all."

"Yet only dreamers have ever really moved the hearts and moulded the destinies of mankind," returned the duchess.

"But everybody dreams," murmured the blue-eyed boy lying on the rug in the firelight.

"Not with their eyes open, Aynsworth. Dreamers are unpractical and of no use in the world," his father told him.

"Oh! In the petty arena of politics, I grant you," the duchess retorted. "Put in the wider world of thought, in the mighty torrent of human development——"

"Dreams that can be put into action no doubt may count for something. But impossible dreams, wild fantasies——"

"Impossible dreams alone are worth dreaming. An ideal that can be realized is none."

The long words fell unheeded on the ear of the little marquis, intent now upon a towering precipice about to

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topple over a dream-city in the heart of the fire! The duke said nothing; he never argued with women beyond a certain point. The duchess was silent too, looking into the fire and in imagination following the vanished vessel beyond the darkening waves in the golden path of a never-setting sun.

.EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

FOR the benefit of those who like to know, the following information has been carefully collected, from various sources of a more or less trustworthy character, concerning the colony of Brothersland, to which reference has frequently been made in these pages.

Brothersland is a considerable tract of unsettled land possessing a small sea-board, presumably in British East Africa, the whole of which tract was either purchased from, or granted by, Government to the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule, as a Chartered Company. The purpose of the colony is to put in practice the theories and principles of the Brotherhood, unhampere*d* by the restrictions and contentions of an overgrown and money-gorged civilization, that is slowly but surely perishing of gross materialism, the result of too much wealth and of the fierce strife and unnatural and unwholesome conditions of industrialism. Sudden and enormous wealth for a few, in juxtaposition with joyless and mechanical drudgery, subject to frequent spasms of enforced idleness (which means starvation for the many) are the children of industrialism, the enemy of all true craftsmanship and of all happy and rational artisan life. Industrialism, the Brotherhood hold to be due chiefly to the struggle for riches and the un-Christian selfishness of commerce, and partly to mechanical inventions—the latter being in great measure the result of that shrinking from manual, the only dignified, labour, which is the child of democracy, always the sworn foe of restraint and authority and physical exertion.

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Noble commerce—that is, commerce pursued not for gain alone, but for the good of man and service of God first and for moderate profits afterwards—together with the organization of every kind of labour, appear to the Brotherhood the only remedies for the gigantic evils at present cankering society, and especially for the frightful reversion of whole populations to heathendom and savagery now apparent in our immense and overgrown cities. True civilization—that is, the utmost development of human capacities, the living according to the will of God and to reason, God's special distinctive gift to men to mark them from other animals—true civilization is not growing richer and living in physical enjoyment and filling the earth with darkness and cruel habitations, and finally reverting, as is the present tendency, to savagery; true civilization is each man living for the good of all, and not each man against every other, which is pure and simple savagery. Civilization is the brotherhood of man; in other words, it is Christianity in every department of human life.

This is the faith of the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule.

Brothersland is to be colonized by those who swear to live by Brotherhood rules. All land is to be held of the Brotherhood on those conditions, and in perpetuity while those conditions are fulfilled.

The colony is no mere aggregation of stray settlers, but a fully organized, self-governing body living according to Brotherhood rules.

The colonists are drawn from all classes of society and are members of various professions and handicrafts and trades. They are of all religious creeds, but the Brotherhood form or body of religion, the state religion, must be definite, and in Brothersland, as in the Motherland, is that of the Anglican Church.

Every trade, profession, and craft in Brothersland has its special guild, a religious fraternity to which each individual member owes obedience and allegiance. Each

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guild in its turn owes obedience and allegiance to the Brotherhood.

There is a Guild of Education, a Guild of Literature, a Guild of Art, a Guild of Journalism, a Guild of Medicine and Health, a Guild of Law, a Guild of Trade, a Guild of Architecture, with subdivisions of the various building trades, a Guild of Victuallers, a Guild of Brewers, a Guild of Bakers, of Tailors, of Sempstresses, of Millers, of Domestic Servants, etc. etc. The Guild of Agriculture includes every occupier of land, which is held on conditions from the Brotherhood, as well as every labourer.

Primary education is chiefly industrial; every man and woman is to learn at least one trade. The able-bodied, unskilled labourer is not to exist. The mentally or bodily deficient alone may be unskilled. All education is to be physical as well as mental and moral. Every male is to be drilled and a marksman—and a potential soldier. Mines are to be worked only by permission of the Brotherhood and in accordance with their rules.

No brother is to possess more than a certain maximum of wealth. Should any brother acquire by lawful Brotherhood methods, or by inheritance or gift, more than that maximum, the overplus becomes the property of the community, unless it is *given* away for definite purposes, of which the Brotherhood demands an exact account.

Though every guild is a religious fraternity, and in Brothersland professes the state religion, which happens for convenience to be Anglican, there is nothing to prevent any Jew, Turk, Infidel, or Heretic becoming a brother or a member of a guild; the Brotherhood demands no profession of faith—that being the prerogative of the church alone—but simply observance of Christian morals in trade and commerce. Yet no professedly non-Christian person could be a full brother, since he would be excluded from guild common prayers and rites, which are few and simple, but definite and periodic.

Immigration laws are unnecessary in Brothersland,

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since no one can inhabit any house (when there are any houses to inhabit), or be upon any land, or exercise any trade, except upon Brotherhood conditions. 8

One man or woman may belong to as many guilds as he or she possesses trades, professions, or handicrafts.

Infraction of Brotherhood or guild rules, if persistent, means expulsion from the guild and ultimately from the colony.

The Brotherhood are prepared to see no return for the capital expended upon Brothersland for many years to come. They aspire to be an agricultural and pastoral people rather than an industrial and commercial community, and aim, by living simply and without luxury, at supplying their own material needs within the limits of Brothersland—food, clothing, building, and furnishing. In this way they think to avoid extremes of wealth and poverty, and also to develop a special type of art and craft, and in particular a special architecture, the natural outgrowth of colonial needs, conditioned by climate, occupation, local material, etc.

There will be no trade unions in Brothersland for the simple reason that the whole community is one vast trade union, branched into many subdivisions, each guild being a trade union in itself and competent to settle all questions of hours, wages, etc. Nor will there be any hard and sharp division between masters and men, all alike being guild members and brothers of the Golden Rule, and all alike being interested in the success of the trade or craft pursued.

The Brotherhood holds also that there is no definite line of division between labour and capital; that the world's wealth consists of natural forces, developed and controlled by human effort both of brain and body; that mere physical exertion is not labour, but that true labour—that is, human effort directed to the production and conservation of the necessities and adornments and

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rational enjoyments of mankind—is of the nature of what is commonly understood by capital, while capital is in reality accumulated or wisely protected and applied labour. In this sense land, even when acquired by conquest, is both capital and accumulated and preserved labour.

The Brotherhood also holds that there is no such thing as Money. The term money denotes either credit, which assumes the possession of material good, probably far beyond the amount of minted coin, supposed to be its equivalent, actually in existence, or of minted coin and stamped paper, in the nature of counters and markers in card games, and conferring on their possessors the power of annexing, with the consent of previous owners, varying and uncertain portions of material comfort and enjoyment.

Wealth, briefly stated, is Natural forces plus human effort; Capital, briefly stated, is Natural forces plus human effort; Labour is human effort plus Natural forces. Therefore Wealth, Labour, and Capital are all the same thing.

This is the faith of the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule.

The Brotherhood holds, further, that character and conduct, being necessary to true, that is productive, labour, are essential elements of capital. Industry, a sense of duty, honesty, and sobriety are too obviously essential to all bread-winning callings to be cited. It is less obvious that, without some self-restraint and perseverance and self-denial, the most elementary kind of labour or acquisition of wealth or material enjoyment is impossible. Three species of human effort are necessary to the production of wealth, and so are components of capital, intellectual, physical, and moral efforts. Conduct or morals is thus in the nature of capital and a component of labour, and is especially prominent in that department of labour known as trade, which is the distribution and circulation of wealth—that is, material

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enjoyment. Hence the Brotherhood's scheme of Noble Commerce, or Trade conducted according to the Golden Rule of Christianity, which should result in a right and equitable distribution of material good, instead of, as at present by selfish commerce, in an unjust and selfish wresting on the part of every trader of as much material enjoyment as he can seize from his neighbour's use to his own.

The guilds aim at emphasizing the moral element in all industry. In organizing its special industry, each guild enforces the mutual interdependence of members; all employers are to a certain degree answerable for the proper surroundings of their labourers; their shops and factories must be so situated that the workers can hire or purchase suitable houses within reach of schools and churches and fresh air and recreation and wholesome and reasonably cheap food. Different guilds have different rules for the retention of labourers in slack times at minimum wages, and for the encouragement of second and third industries, to supplement inevitable stoppage of work in their first industry. The Builders' Guild includes all industries necessary to erect houses, from the architect's to the locksmith's, the plumber's, and the plasterer's.

The Guild of Literature includes all arts and trades necessary to the production of books, even the trade of the publisher—for the brethren do not lightly call any man common or unclean; besides, they permit no man without some slight literary taste and knowledge to be a publisher. It also includes drama, Brothersland's subsidized theatre existing partly to bring literature, and even poetry, back to the stage.

The Guild of Art takes cognizance of everything to which any art may be applied; architects are answerable to this guild, which permits no avoidable ugliness anywhere, and oversees the first beginnings of towns, which cannot be allowed to straggle up anyhow, but must be built, even the tiniest cottage or shed in them, on a plan,

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with reference to natural surroundings, and with proper spaces and due breadth and direction of streets.

Amongst guilds that of Domestic Service is important ; its members are both masters and servants. No master may dismiss a servant without assigning and registering a cause for dismissal ; nor may any servant leave service without the same, except by permission of the guild. Nor may any house master or employer of any kind refuse to any discharged servant or labourer a full character, good or bad, and true statement of length and terms of service. Nor may any servant or labourer refuse to produce his register of service, a copy of which is on the guild records from the beginning of his service, with reasons for entering and leaving each service. The guild exacts proper lodging and feeding of servants, and recognizes the employer's right to dismiss without notice for specified offences.

These are some of the leading peculiarities of the colony of Brothersland and of the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule. Those sufficiently interested either in the principles of the Brotherhood or in their experiment in fully carrying them out in the wilderness, and so forming a nucleus, whence their practice may radiate through the whole world, may inquire for fuller information of the Chief Secretary of the Eldest Brother of the Rule, or of the Intelligence Department of the Colony of Brothersland.

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